



5 arterial routes & 1000 commercial signs

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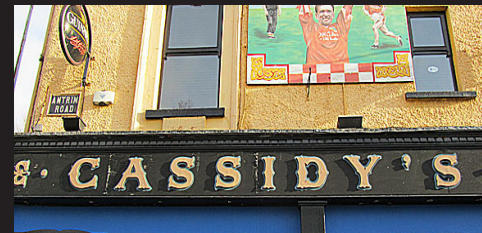
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Five arterial routes: 1000 commercial signs



6 Most of us take our surroundings for granted.

We subconsciously scan the trees, the shop windows and other familiar landmarks as we make our way and we register a vague pleasure in the scene, or equally vague dislike. But our conscious relationship with it is by way of the things which take our fancy, or may affect us.

Words especially get noticed for the latter reason, and because they convey information about the world we live in directly, unlike, say, the sky, which has to be interpreted.

– Jock Kinnear

By observing signs of place we gain insight as to where we are ...



New York Times Square - neon augmented signs



London Picadilly – underground sign unmistakably London – Edward Johnston, Johnston Sans, introduced 1916



Paris – metro sign signals we could be nowhere but Paris – Metropolitain, Hector Guimard, 1901



Amsterdam - neon signs



Rome – Roman inscription on the Pantheon – specific to this city although emulated elsewhere



Greece – Greek Alphabet – derived from Phoenician – the signs would indicate that we were in Greece



Cairo - Egyptian Arabic writing would tell us we were in Egypt

- 'It is the highway signs , through their sculptural forms or pictorial silhouettes, their particular positions in space, their inflected shapes, and their graphic meanings, that identify and unify the megatexture'¹⁴ - Robert Venturi



'If you take the signs away there is no place'

Typography on signage is ubiquitous

- It is everywhere - all around us and omnipresent in our everyday lives
- Nowhere is it more apparent than when we step out onto our streets
- In the urban environment we are surrounded by signs
- Architecture and town planning may create the built environment, but it is signage that informs reliably on the nature of urban places

Signs 'speak while doors and windows remain mute'

– Baines and Dixon

Considering signs in Belfast ...

- City centre—signs create an image of economic success to match other European cities



- The city has been re-imaged/reassigned as culturally neutral/architecturally revived
- 'Nothing eradicates a sense of locality more than a consistent promotion of an identity' 9*
- Phil Baines



In the urban environment signs can indicate 'safe' places ...

- Tourist Belfast ... expensive signs and well-designed messages



Signs can also suggest 'less-safe' places ...

- Away from the main tourist area—cultural or local knowledge needed to decide on safety
- Run-down poorly-presented signage can indicate less economically viable places



- Arterial routes of the city ... Place and signs created over time.



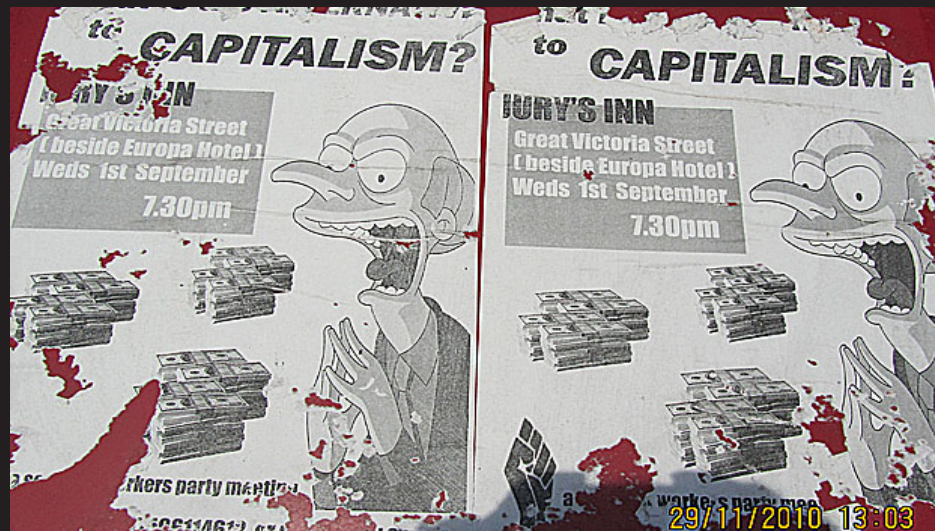
Many types of signs in the urban environment of the arterial routes ...

“ When we cross a street corner we encounter a complex array of signs and discourses. There are signs regulating vehicular traffic, there are signs regulating pedestrian traffic. We see lines painted on the street: some for pedestrians, some for automobiles, some for electrical workers who are to pull up a manhole to repair the lines underneath. We see commercial advertisements, public official notices, street and building identifications, graffiti, and pasted up notices for legal and even illegal goods and services.

– Scollon & Scollon



Graffiti



Billboards, posters and ad-hoc signs



Street signs



Murals



Regulatory and wayfinding signs

Investigation focussed on commercial signs



Value of commercial signage in the built environment

- Informs on location, directs to destinations and warns of dangers.
- While window displays may inform on the nature of goods sold in shops, or indicate services provided through visual cues, it is signage that designates, with surety, business purposes.
- People scan signs in order to find a café, or supermarket, clothes shop, dentist, doctor's surgery or post office; whatever the needs of the individual, signage designates where these needs may be met.
- May deliver contextual visual information about the general social environment.
- Without signage there would be an absence of information and environmental cues.

Codes and conventions for information on signage

- It is on signage that language is represented, as the spoken word is given typographic form.
- Created from a choice of letterstyles and materials.
- Displayed at a range of sizes and executed in a range of colours .

Criteria for investigation:

Language

Letterform

Colours

Materials

Maintenance

Language, letterforms and colours on signage are all codes which should have meaningful communicative value to the majority of people, the dominant cultural group, in places where the signage is situated.

Language

- Language on local vernacular signage may represent local conversational themes and regional dialects.
- Connections may be established between language and geographical background – it may be representative of culture and place.
- The social sphere for this investigation is the built environment of arterial routes of Belfast and within this environment signage may display evidence of local dialects, those of people living on these routes.







Letterform and colour

- Choice of letterstyle may influence how language is perceived, providing a tone of voice, as language is dressed and characters provided with personality.
- A formal uppercase letter may provide a formal tone to the message, such as might be used to convey the gravitas appropriate for signage denoting a solicitor's office, or accountancy firm.
- A hairdresser might opt for an informal, say brush script, style of letterform and might imbue that letterform with a bright pink hue to associate the sign with femininity.

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SOLICITORS

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CHARTERED
CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS

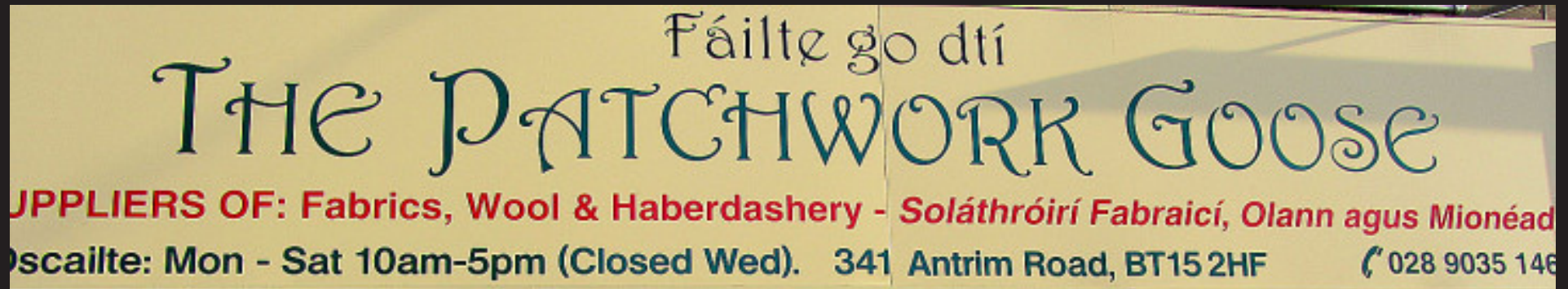


Materials

- Choice of location and material presentation of letterforms on buildings may influence how signage is perceived.
- Signage on a fascia board may have lettering constructed from vinyl, wood, or metal.
- Where there is no fascia board lettering may be, though less frequently in contemporary society, carved onto the building front.
- Lettering may be located discretely on a plaque, or situated within the window of premises.



Plastic



Vinyl on wood



Metal plaque



Metal lettering on metal fascia:



Hand painted lettering



Architectonic - carved into building materials

Maintenance

- The age of signage, buildings and by association place, may be determined through observations of the patina.
- It points to the perception of the passage of time through the idea of ageing and decay... the understanding of patina as something negative normally arises from the fact of it being a symbol of that which is old.
- However, in reading the city patina may provide a valuable historical record of spaces and places, buildings and signage, its obviousness makes it accessible to all.
- Removal of the patina removes evidence of the history of a place, its endurance over time and the work of co-authors who have, over time, created the image of the urban environment.



Fading and weathering, even breakage may evidence patina



Patina

Investigating signage on Belfast's arterial routes

0.5 mile sections

5 routes

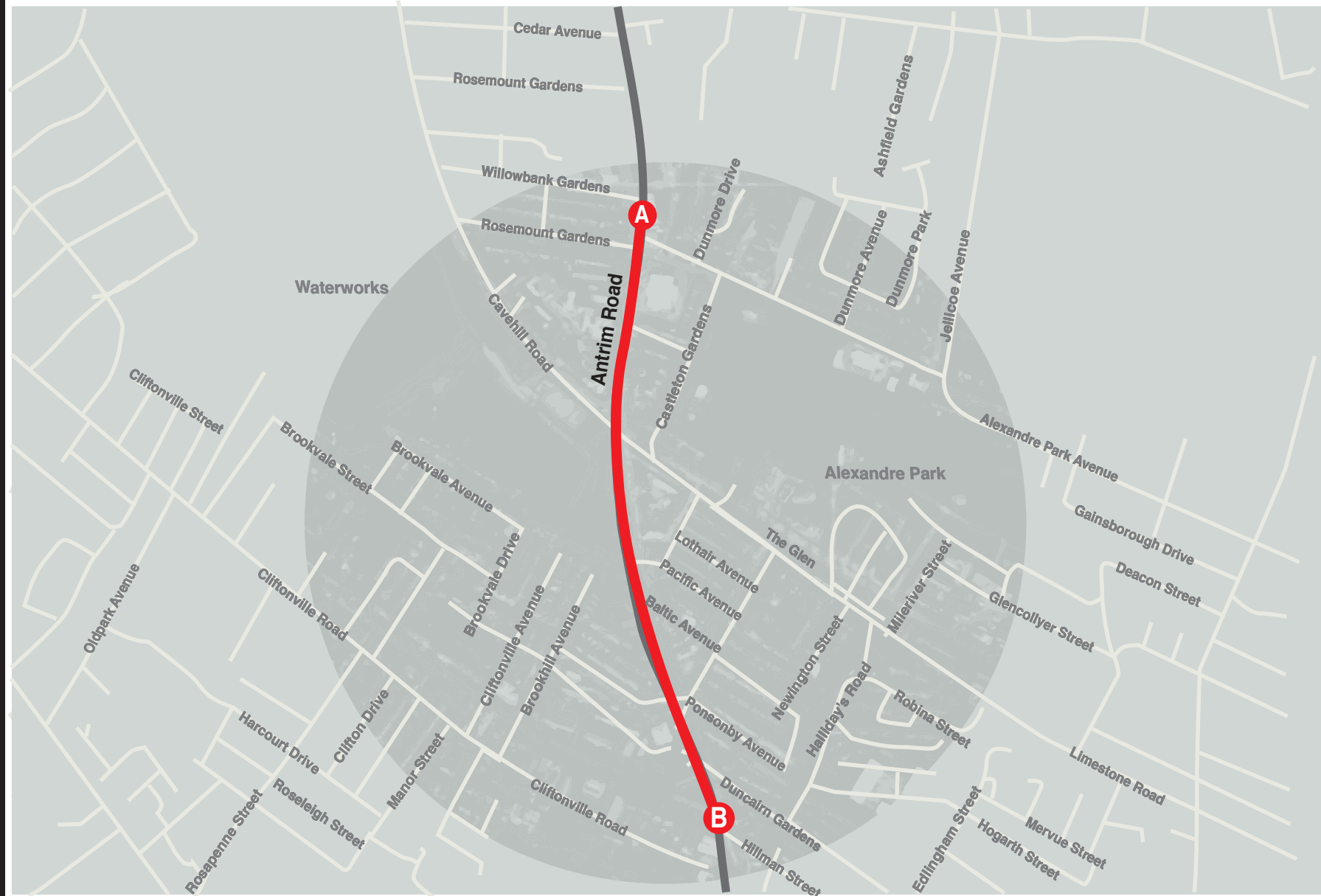
1000 signs

Signage photographed within the context of the built environment

The arterial routes



Antrim Road 0.5 mile route selection aerial map



Falls Road 0.5 mile route selection aerial map



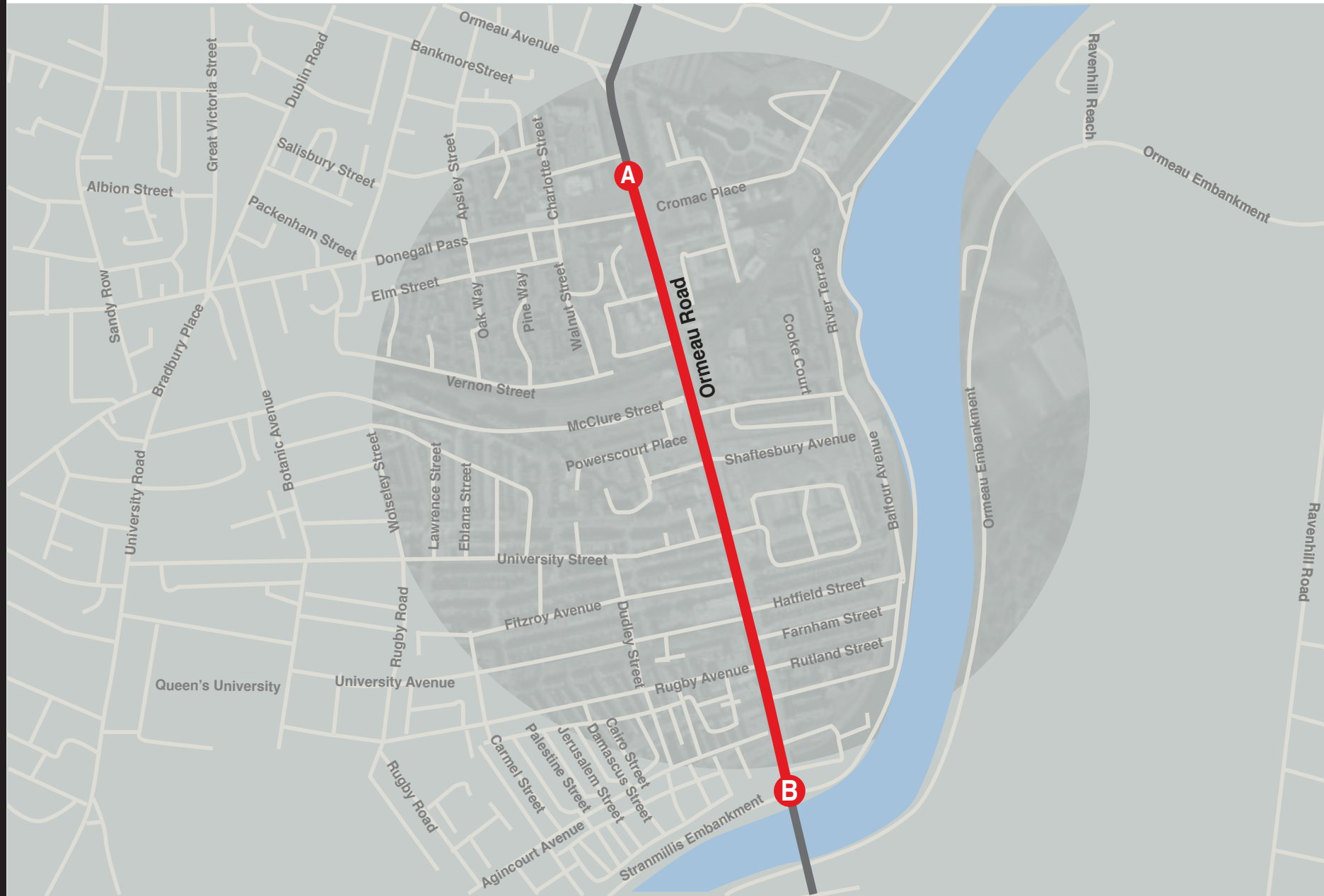
Lisburn Road 0.5 mile route selection aerial map



Newtownards Road 0.5 mile route selection aerial map



Ormeau Road 0.5 mile route selection aerial map



The method

- One side of the road was walked along the footpath from the start to end point and photographs of buildings on the other side were taken, to capture elevations.
- This process was repeated, taking photographs from the other side of the road. The result was a set of elevation images of each side of the route.
- Each photograph was taken 12 paces apart.



-----> 12 paces



-----> 12 paces



----->

Piecing the images together



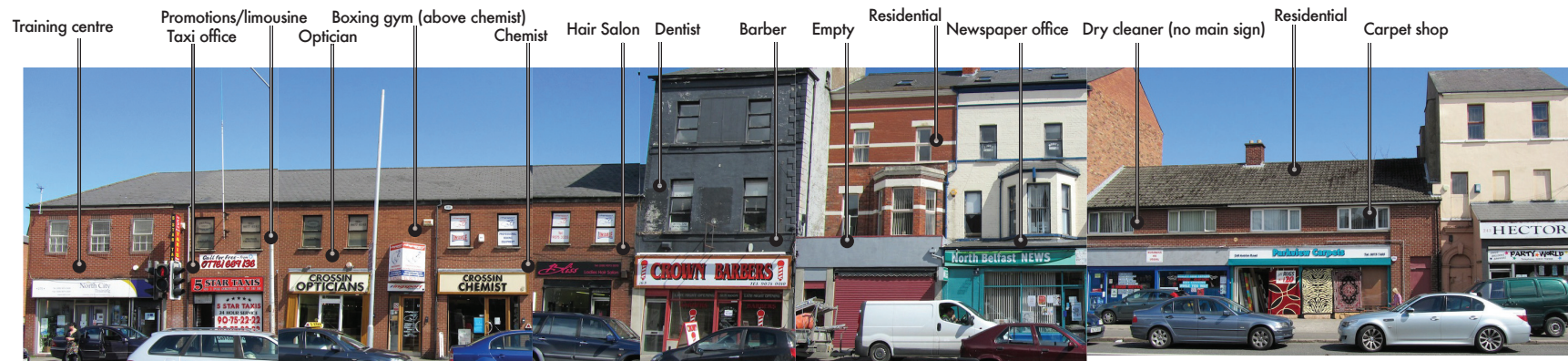
Total route length 0.5 miles comprising hundreds of images



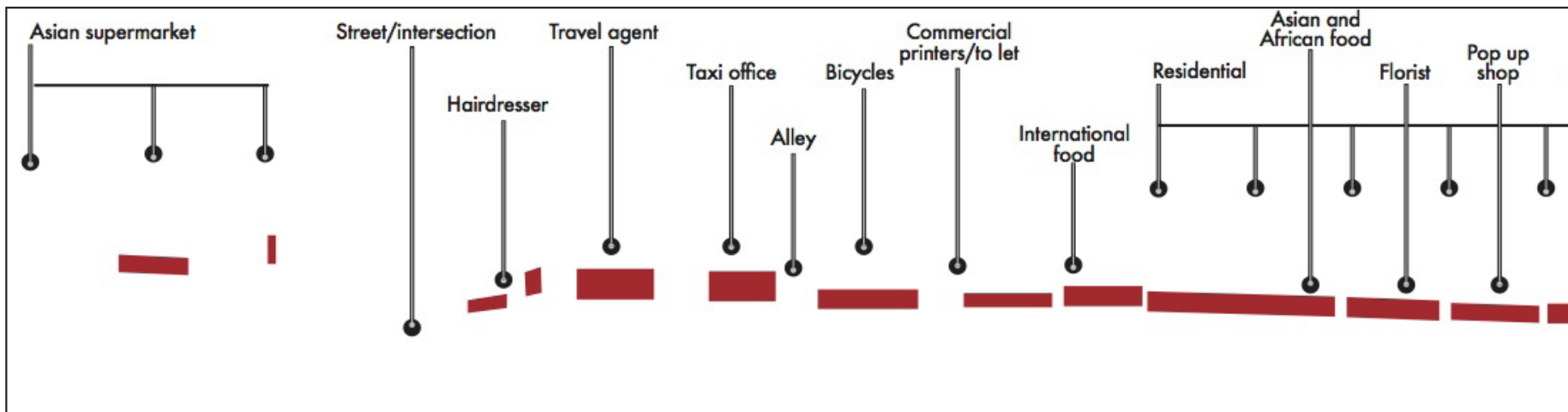
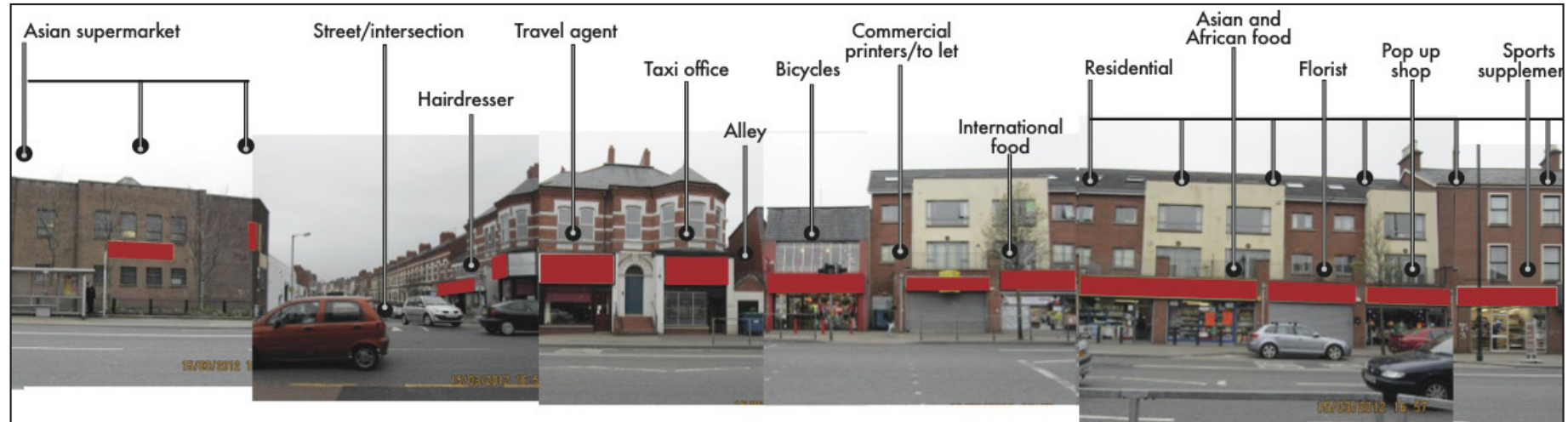
Sample section images pieced together Falls Road



Marking up the built environment



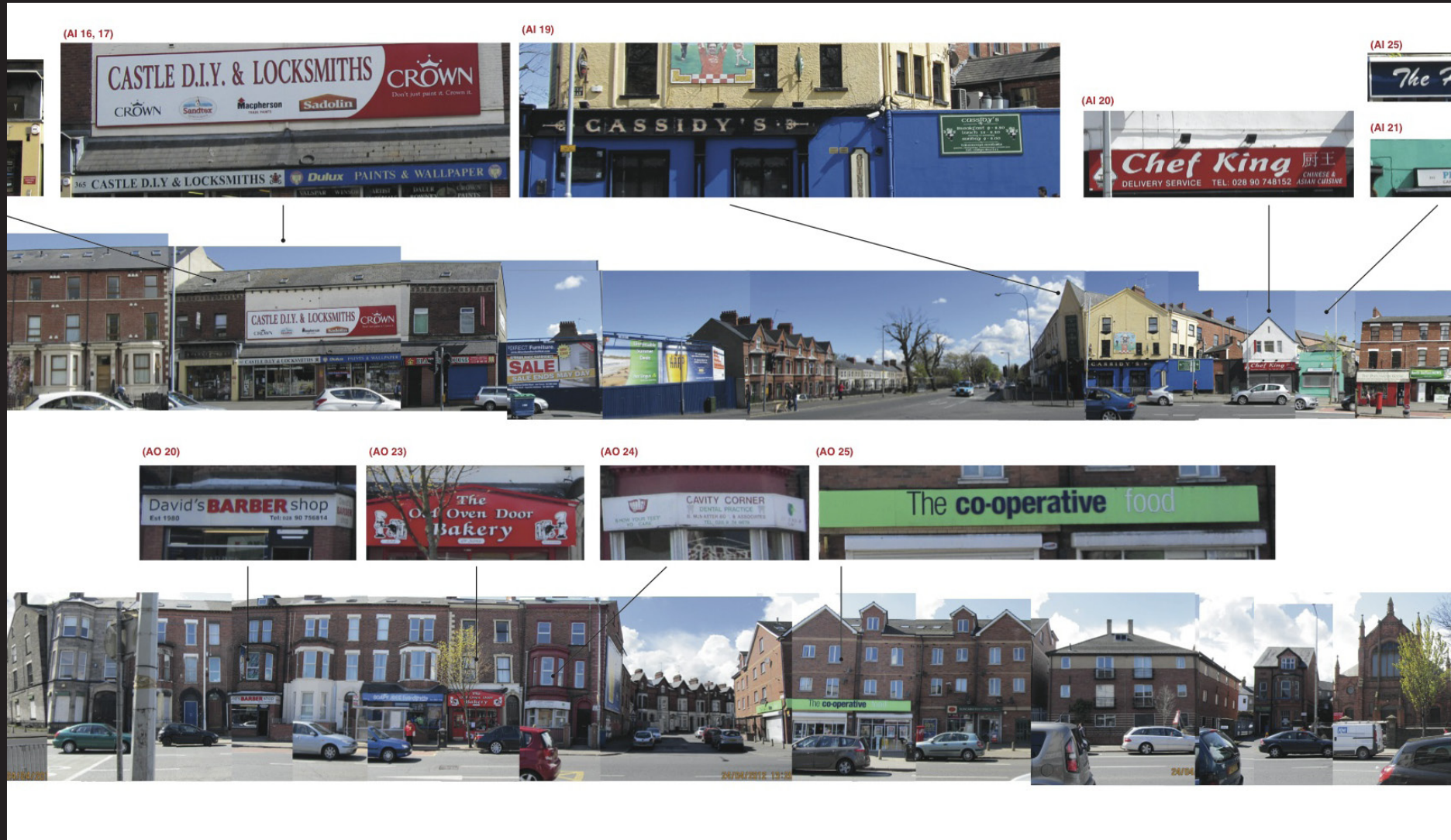
Plotting the location, size and densities of signs



Plotting elevations with references



Plotting signage

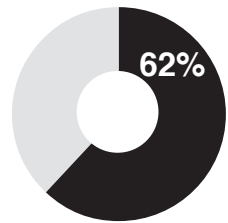


Observations built environment - tables

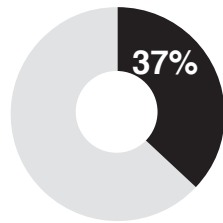
	Number of storeys	Building Material/s	Front painted/part painted?	Business	Residential	Business + residential	Bay windows 1st floor	Bay windows 2nd floor	Footprint of building in units	Incidences of commercial signs	Nature of business/businesses
1	1	Brick/metal		✓					8	✓	Tesco
2	2	Red/Y brick		✓					1	✓ ✓	Menswear Solicitor
3	2	Red/Y brick		✓					1	✓	Bank
4	3	Red brick			✓		✓	✓	1		
5	3	Red brick			✓		✓	✓	1		
6	3	Red brick				✓	✓	✓	1	✓	Bicycles
7	3	Red brick				✓	✓	✓	1	✓	Dentist
8	2	Red brick			✓		✓	✓	1		
9	2	Red brick			✓		✓		1		
10	2	Red brick			✓		✓		1		
11	2	Red brick			✓		✓	✓	1		
12	3	Red brick			✓		✓		1		
13	3	Red brick			✓		✓		1		
14	3	Red brick			✓		✓		1		
15	2	Red brick		✓					1	✓	Optometrist
16	2	Red brick		✓					1	✓	DIY
17	2	Red brick		✓					1	✓	Wallpaper
18	2	Red brick		✓					1	✓	Chinese
19	3		✓	✓					3	✓	Bar
20	2		✓	✓					1	✓	Chinese
21	1		✓	✓					1	✓	Pizza
22	3	Red brick				✓			1	✓	Haberdasher
23	3	Red brick				✓			1	✓	Newsagent
24	3	Red brick				✓			1	✓	Charity
25	3	Red brick		✓					1	✓	Wedding
26	3	Red brick		✓					1	✓	Beauty/Hair

Graphs built environment

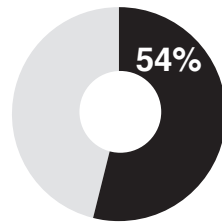
Of the 94 buildings within the 0.5 mile section of this route ...



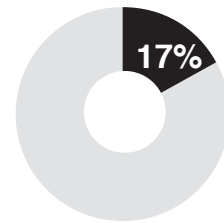
58 Red brick



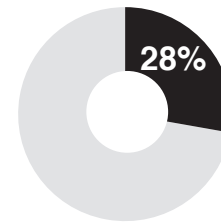
35 Front painted



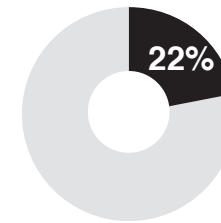
51 Business only



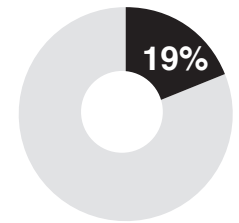
16 Residential only



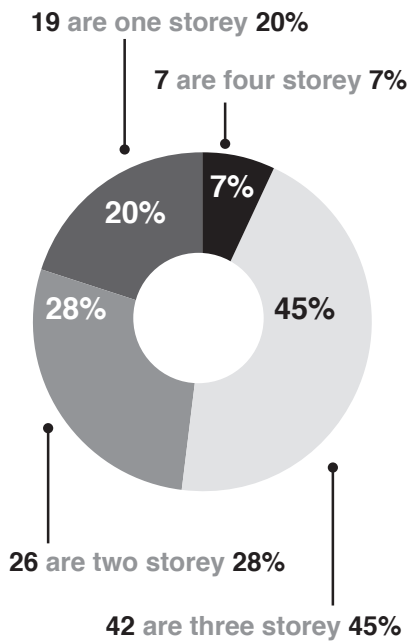
26 Business and residential



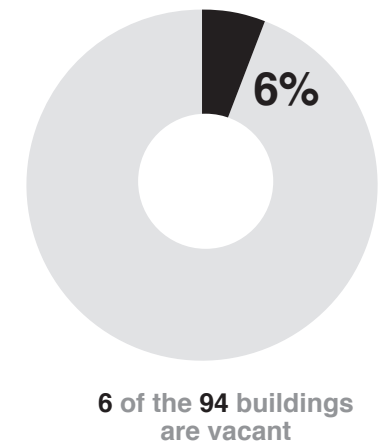
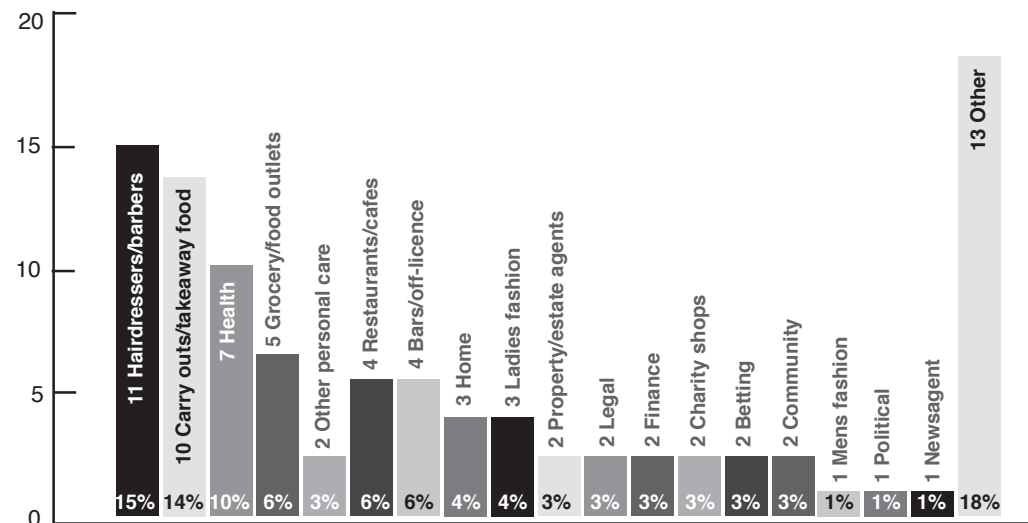
21 Bay windows first floor



18 Bay windows second floor



Of 72 total businesses there are ...



6 of the 94 buildings are vacant

There are 72 signs on 77 commercial premises within the 0.5 mile section of this route
There are 72 signs on a total of 94 buildings within the 0.5 mile section of this route

Observations signage - by category

Route		Total population of signs left and right hand side of route																			
		Antrim		Antrim		Falls		Falls		Lisburn		Lisburn		N'ards		N'ards		Ormeau		Ormeau	
Primary category		In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	LHS	RHS	LHS	RHS		
	1. Carry outs	10	11	1		7	10	3		0	2	2		2	6	4	1	5	4		33
	6. Hairdressers/ barbers	11	12	1		6	7	1		9	11	2		3	3	0	2	4	1		36
	4. Health	7	9	2		7	9	2		4	8	4		4	4	0	0	4	4		34
	2. Grocery /food outlets	5	7	2		2	2	0		7	13	6		3	6	3	4	7	3		35
	Other personal care	2	2	0		1	2	1		6	6	0		0	1	1	0	1	1		12
	5. Restaurants/ cafes	4	4	0		4	5	1		16	19	3		1	1	0	1	2	1		31
	6. Bars/ off-licence	4	4	0		2	3	1		0	2	2		1	4	3	1	4	3		17
	7. Home	3	3	0		1	1	0		5	7	2		3	3	3	1	3	2		20
	Ladies fashion	3	3	0		0	1	1		15	17	2		0	0	0	0	0	0		21
	Mens fashion	1	1	0		0	0	0		4	6	2		0	0	0	0	0	0		7
	Property/ estate agents	2	2	0		1	1	0		7	7	0		0	0	0	1	2	1		12
Legal	2	2	0		2	4	2		0	1	1		0	0	0	0	1	1		8	
Finance	2	2	0		1	1	0		5	6	1		0	0	0	0	2	2		11	
Charity shop	2	5	3		0	0	0		2	2	0		1	1	0	0	1	1		9	

Observations signage - analysis sheets

SIGN ANALYSIS

Category: ☒ Carry-outs/takeaway food
☐ Grocery/food outlets
☐ Restaurants/cafes
☐ Health
☐ Bars/off-licence
☐ Hairdressers/barbers
☐ Home

Location: ☒ Antrim Road
☐ Falls Road
☐ Lisburn Road
☐ Newtownards Road
☐ Ormeau Road

Sector: ☐ Public (For example, police, fire, education, healthcare, government agency, state-funded enterprise)
☒ Private (Private individuals or groups, such as shopkeeper)
☐ Community (Charity, advice or community services)

Image (photograph) of sign:



Name of sign (message on sign as it reads): Manny's Traditional fish and chips

Secondary information (supporting messages): Est. 1981 Delivery telephone number

1. Condition What overall condition is the sign in?

☒ Good Explain Sign appears fairly new and in good condition.
☐ Bad
☐ Fair No breakages or fading evident.

2. Language What overall impression does the language used or do the words used, convey?

☒ Friendly ☒ Branded, using logo or style?
☐ Unfriendly ☐ Do they refer to place?
☐ Formal ☒ Are they matter-of fact – stating business purpose.
☐ Informal ☐ Other (Explain) Manny's is personal providing a name, appears friendly.
☒ Personal States business purpose as fish and chips. Logo on roundel on roof.

Is the message easily read?

☒ Yes (Explain) Good clear lettering, positioning of lettering and letter and word spacing.
☐ No

Who do you think the message is talking to? Who is the discourse with or aimed at?

☐ Male ☐ Other (Explain) Those wanting an affordable takeaway supper.
☐ Female
☒ Both

3. Materials and manufacture What is the sign made of?

☐ Wood ☐ Other (Explain) Flat plastic box over door with flush lettering.
☒ Plastic Roundel and lettering applied to roof area as individual elements.
☐ Metal

Does the sign appear to be expensively or inexpensively made?

☐ Expensive (Explain) Well executed, modern but not particularly expensive materials.
☐ Inexpensive
☒ Neither

Does it look like there has been professional input involved in making the sign?

☒ Yes (Explain) Basic design skills.
☐ No No obvious intervention by professional designer.
☐ Designer
☒ Sign-maker

4. Shape What shape is the sign?

☒ Rectangular ☒ Other (Explain) Triangular on roof area. Rectangular above entrance.
☐ Square Two signs combined make sign imagery conspicuous and unusual.
☐ Round

5. Colours What colours are used on the sign?

☐ Black ☒ Blue ☒ Yellow ☐ Red ☐ Other (Explain) _____
☒ White ☐ Green ☐ Gold ☐ Pink
☐ Grey ☐ Orange ☐ Silver ☐ Purple

☐ What impression (if any) might the colours give of the sort of place this is? (Explain)
Bright primary colours - welcoming appearance through use of colour. Brightness of colours makes sign conspicuous against background of buildings.

6. Size What size is the sign in relation to the building?

☐ About right ☐ Other (Explain) Sign is about half the size of the one-storey building.
☒ Big
☐ Small

Where is the sign placed on the building? (Explain) Above doorway and on roof area.

7. Words/lettering How and where are the words placed on the sign?

☒ Centred ☐ Other (Explain) Centred with supporting messages to left and right.
☐ Left
☐ Right

What size is the lettering compared to the size of the sign? (Does it fill the space completely?)

Space and colour is left without messages to increase conspicuity and legibility.

What sort of lettering does the sign use?

☐ Serif ☐ Other (Explain) _____
☒ Sans-serif Bold and plain sans-serif with some outlined lettering. All uppercase.
☐ Bespoke

Does the lettering seem appropriate or usual for the type of business this is?

☐ Yes (Explain) Sans-serif, suited to many uses – unspecific. Not inappropriate.
☐ No
☒ Maybe

8. Lighting How is the sign illuminated?

☒ From inside
☒ From above Explain Strip of lighting on roof and illuminated box above door.
☐ From below

9. Culture Is there reference to local culture or place evident in the sign?

☐ Yes Explain Perhaps socio-economic evidence due to type of takeaway food sold.
☐ No
☒ Maybe Primary colours may also be socio-economic indicators. Good condition.

Observations signage - tables

Sign characteristics from primary categories all routes

1

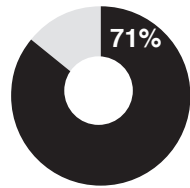
Category: **Carry-outs/takeaway food**

	Condition	Words on sign	Language/tone	Legibility	Materials	Colours	Design intervention	Letter-style	Logo/symbol
Antrim Road									
Manny's	Good	Manny's traditional fish and chips	Friendly/personal	Good	Plastic	Blue/White Yellow	Sign-maker	Sans-serif u/c	Logo
Elements	Good	Elements Cantonese and European takeaway	Formal	Good	Plastic/metal/silver	Black/white/red/silver/grey	Designer sign-maker	Sans-serif u/c /Chinese symbol	X
Chef King	Good	Chef King Chinese and Asian cuisine	Friendly	Good	Plastic	Red/white/gold	Sign-maker	Italic script /Chinese symbol u/c	Chef image icon
Aldos	Good	Aldo's traditional fish and chips	Friendly/personal	Good	Plastic/metal	Blue/ White Yellow	Sign-maker	Outlined serif and italic u/c	Fish on each side-icon
Peppino Pizzas	Fair	Peppino Pizzas carry-out and delivery service	Friendly/matter-of-fact	Fair	Plastic	Pale blue/green/ white	Sign-maker	Serif display font, likely Cooper Black u/c	X
Weo Ping	Good	Weo Ping Chinese & European hot food carryout	Branded matter-of-fact	Good	Plastic	Purple/gold/ white	Designer sign-maker	Outlined Serif u/c	X
Night of Bengal	Good	Night of Bengal curry, kebab, European	Branded Friendly	Good	Plastic	Maroon red/ yellow/cream	Sign-maker	Script u/c handwriting	Images of spices-icons
Falls Road									
Salvezza Pizzeria	Fair breakage	Salvezza Pizzeria	Informal matter-of-fact	Fair quite dark	Plastic	Brown/green/ white	Sign-maker	Serif u/c	X
King Kebab	Fair faded	King Kebab Kebab and European	Branded formal matter-of-fact	Good	Plastic	white/red/ yellow	Sign-maker	Serif u/c some bespoke treatment	Image of crown on lettering icon
Happy House	Good	Happy House Chinese and European takeaway	Friendly	Good	Plastic	white/red/ yellow	Sign-maker	Sans-serif u/c	Chef image icon

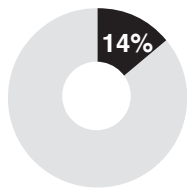
Graphs - signage

Antrim Road – Carry-outs/takeaway food

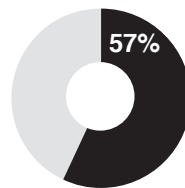
1



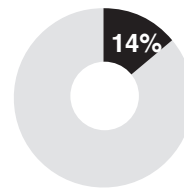
Good condition



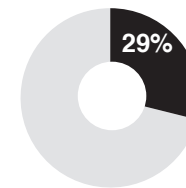
Fair condition



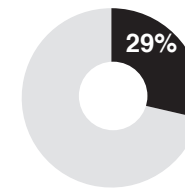
Friendly



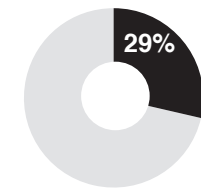
Formal



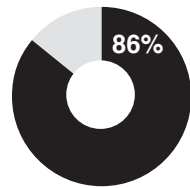
Branded



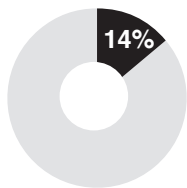
Matter-of-fact



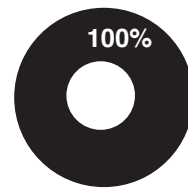
Personal



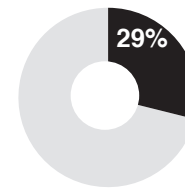
Legibility good



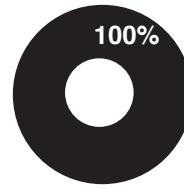
Legibility fair



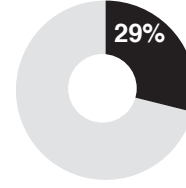
Plastic



Plastic/metal



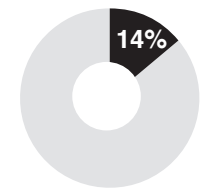
Sign-maker



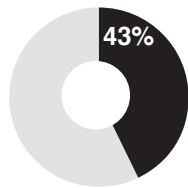
Designer



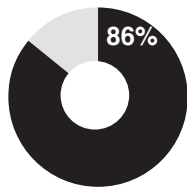
Green



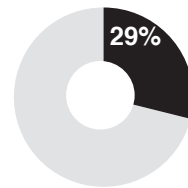
Purple



Blue



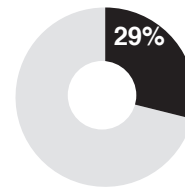
White



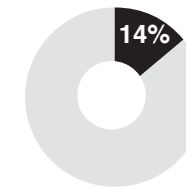
Yellow



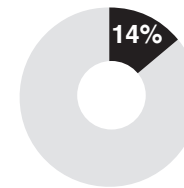
Red



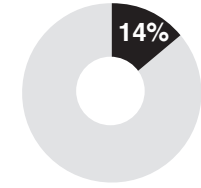
Gold



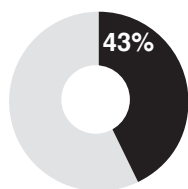
Silver



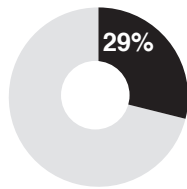
Grey



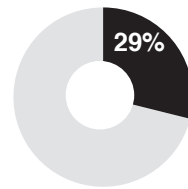
Cream



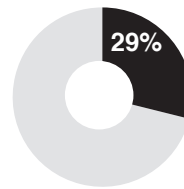
Serif



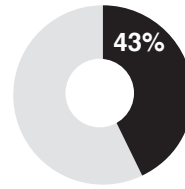
Sans-serif



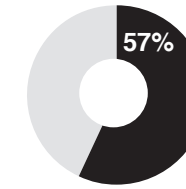
Script



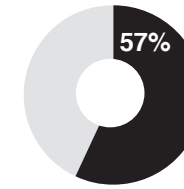
Italic



Uppercase



Upper/lower case



Logo/symbol/Icon

Typographic terms: **Serif** – examples



Typographic terms: Sans - serif – examples



Typographic terms: **Script** – examples



Typographic terms: Custom – examples



Findings on signage each arterial route

Criteria for investigation:

Language

Letterform

Colours

Materials

Maintenance

Antrim Road: Language and typography

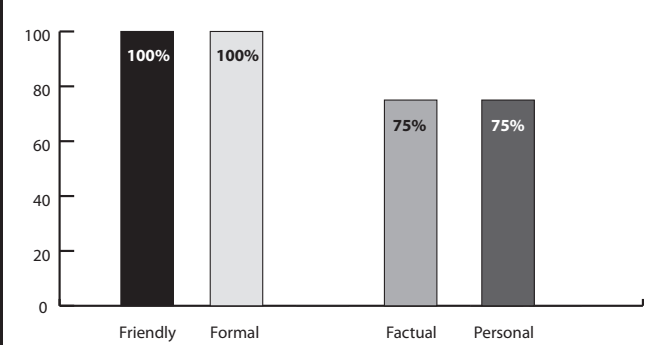


Antrim Road: Colours and materials

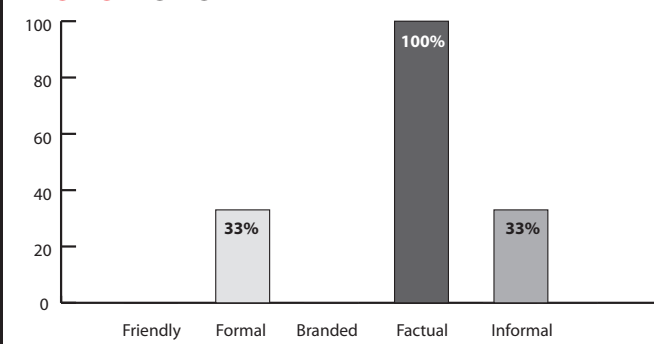


Antrim Road: Language

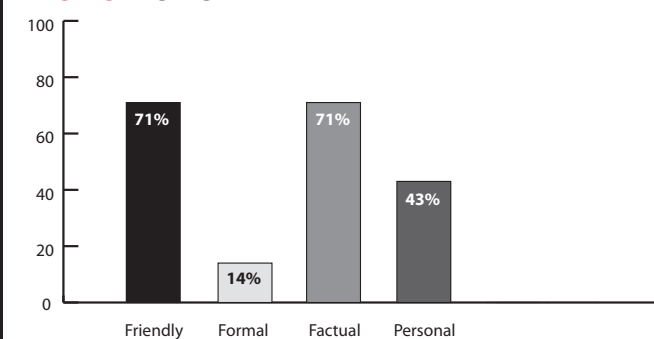
Language signage AR restaurants/cafes



Language signage AR home

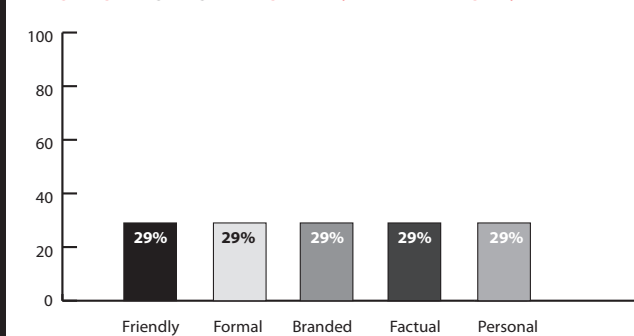


Language signage AR hairdressers/barbers

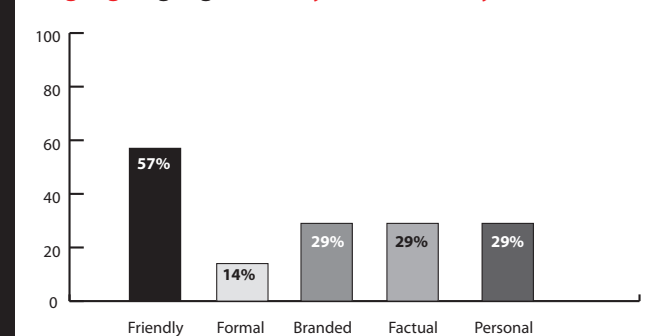


- In all instances, except the home category, language is perceived as friendly – first names used.
- Restaurants/cafés category language was perceived to be both friendly and personal.
- Signage for all categories was perceived as factual, with branding appearing only in the carryouts/takeaway food category and grocery/food category.
- The mention of a person's name was only absent in the home category.

Language signage AR grocery/food category

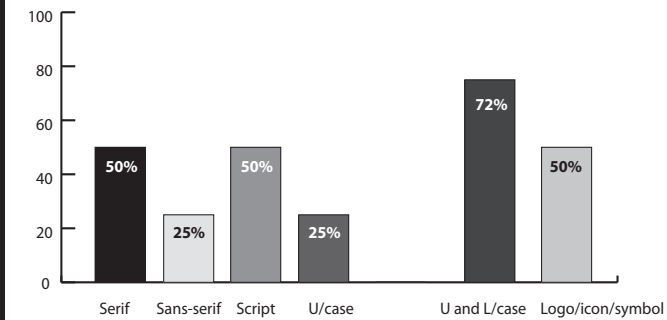


Language signage AR carry outs/takeaway food

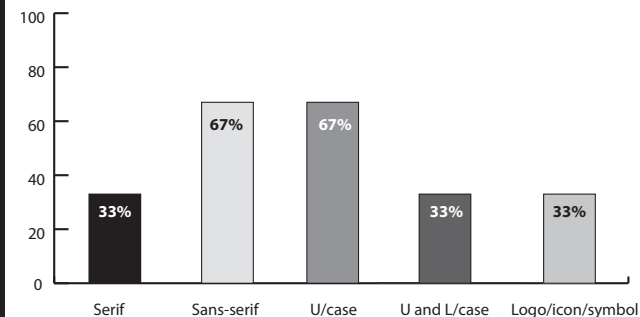


Antrim Road: Letterforms

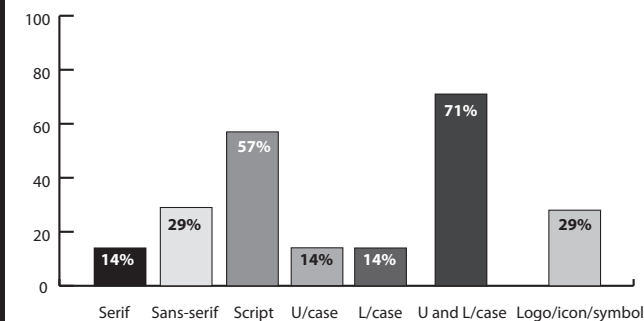
Letterforms signage AR restaurants/cafes



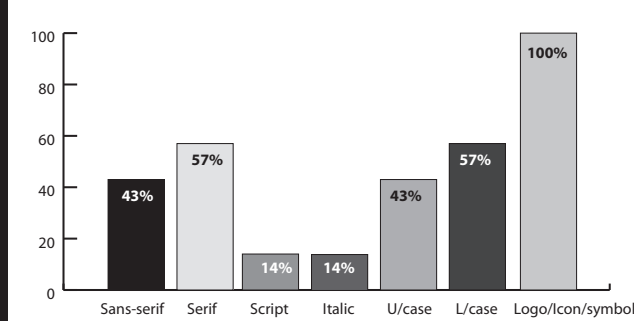
Letterforms signage AR home



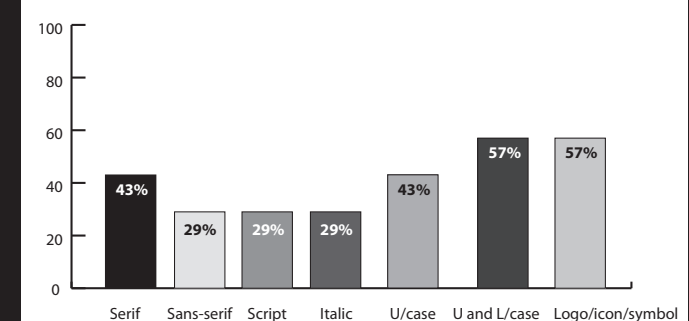
Letterforms signage AR hairdressers/barbers



Letterforms signage AR grocery/food category



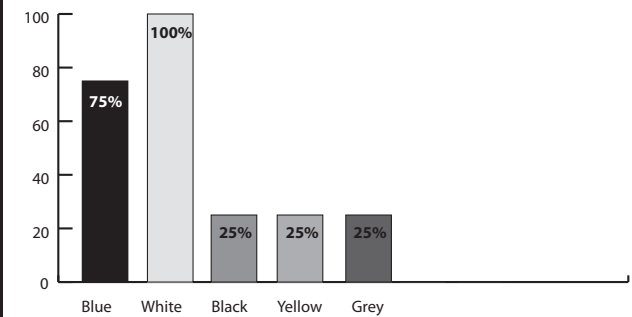
Letterforms signage AR carry outs/takeaway food



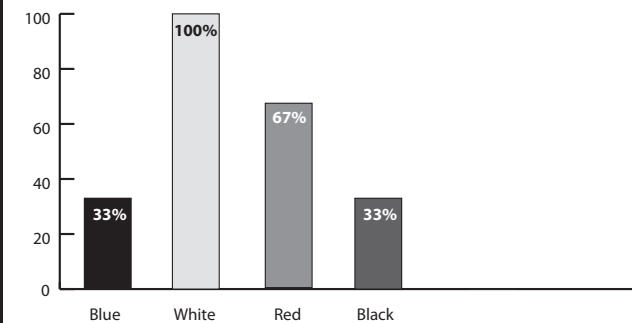
- Both sans-serif and serif letterforms in all categories.
- Script appeared in all but home category – a high proportion for hairdressers and barbers.
- Uppercase only on carryouts/takeaway food, grocery and food and restaurants/café.
- In all categories logos, icons or symbolic signs.
- No custom lettering.

Antrim Road: Colours

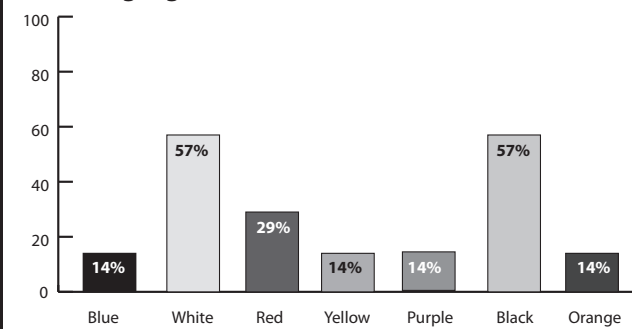
Colours signage AR restaurants/cafes



Colours signage AR home

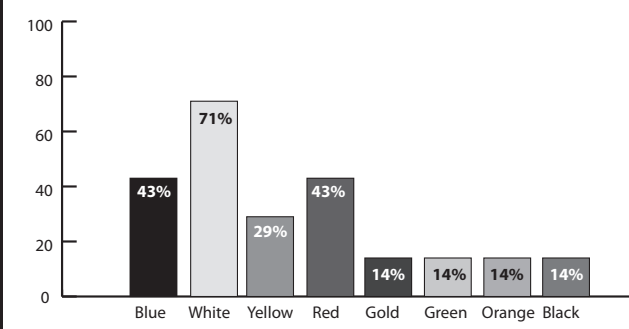


Colours signage AR hairdressers/barbers

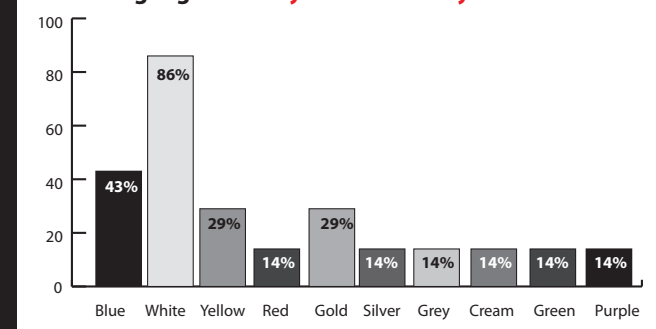


- Greatest range – takeaway food, ten colours.
- Most commonly used – white, black on all but takeaway food. Yellow on all but the home category.
- Unionist colour palette – red white and blue, all except the restaurants/cafés category (no red).
- Subtle sophisticated hues, silver and cream, only in the takeaway food category, in small proportions.

Colours signage AR grocery/food category

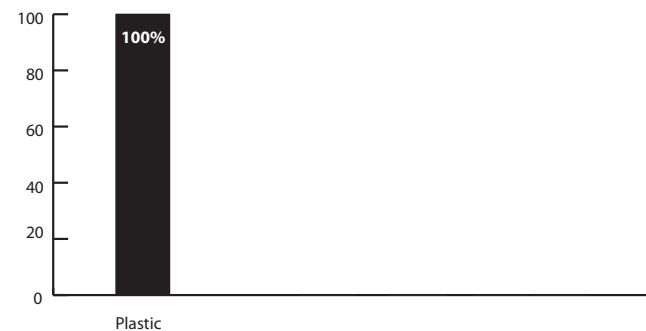


Colours signage AR carry outs/takeaway food

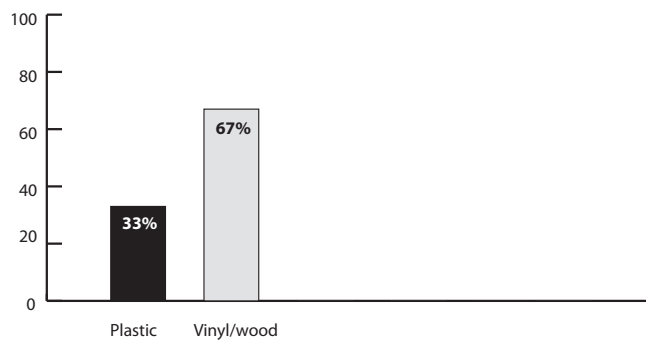


Antrim Road: **Materials**

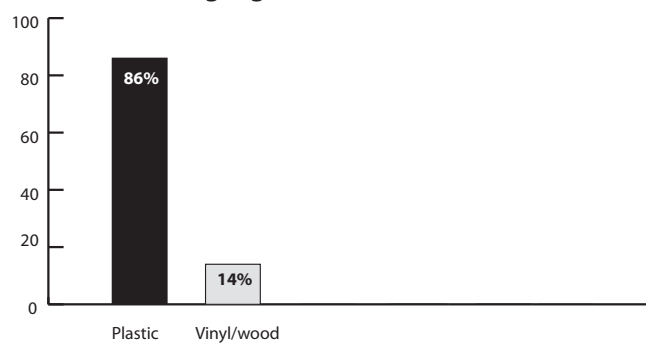
Materials used signage AR restaurants/cafes



Materials used signage AR home



Materials used signage AR hairdressers/barbers



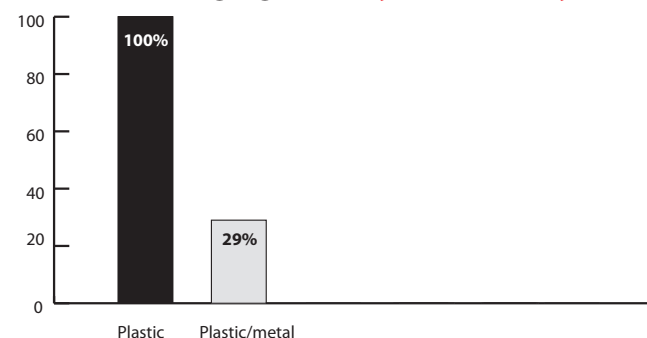
- Limited range of materials

- 100% takeaway food, grocery and food and restaurants/cafés used plastic. 80% of signage hairdressers/barbers made from plastic.

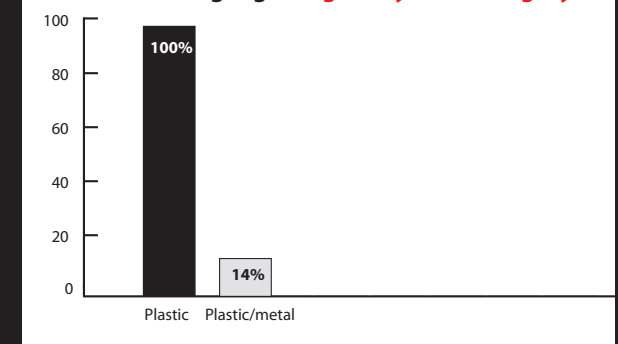
- Some vinyl/wood.

- Limited and inexpensive range of materials used in the creation of signage on the Antrim road – representative of limited economic means of people in communities on this route.

Materials used signage AR carry outs/takeaway food

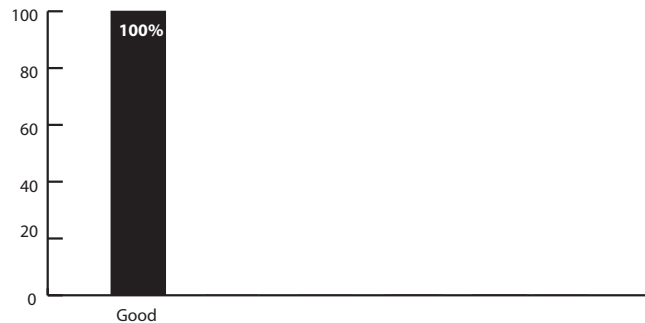


Materials used signage AR grocery/food category

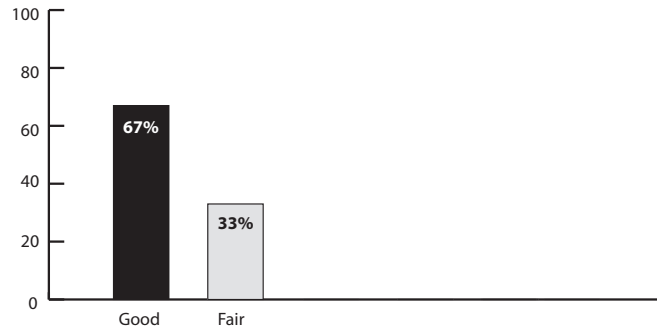


Antrim Road: Maintenance (condition)

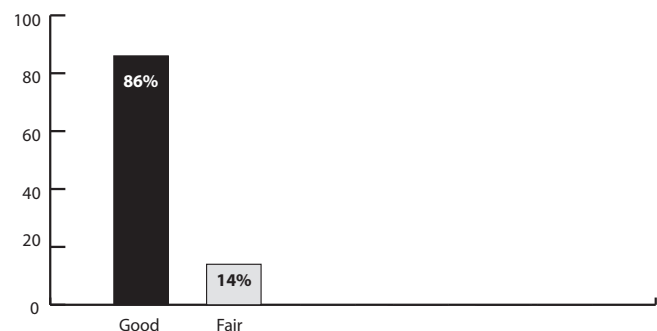
Condition/maintenance signage AR restaurants/cafes



Condition/maintenance signage AR home

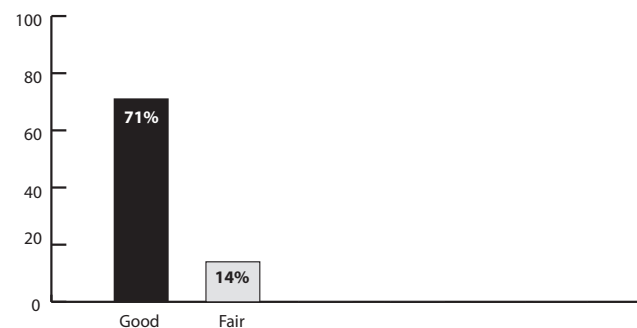


Condition/maintenance signage AR hairdressers/barbers

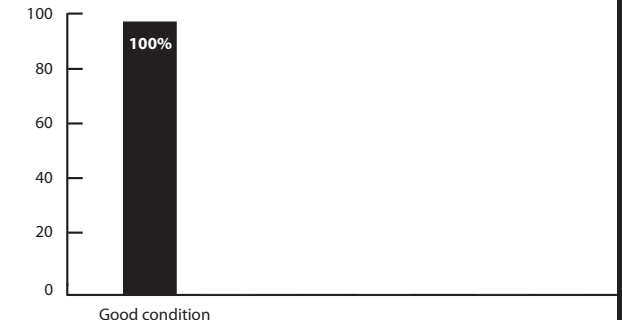


- Most signage in a good condition/well-maintained.
- 100% of signage in the grocery/food and restaurant/cafés category in good condition.
- 86% hairdressers/barbers and takeaway food in good condition.
- Home category 67% good/33% needs maintenance
- Broken signage/possible socio-economic decline.

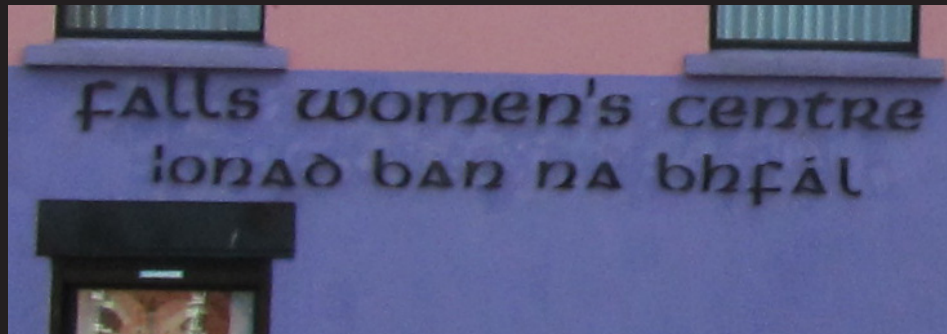
Condition/maintenance signage AR carry outs/takeaway



Condition/maintenance signage AR grocery/food



Falls Road: Language and typography

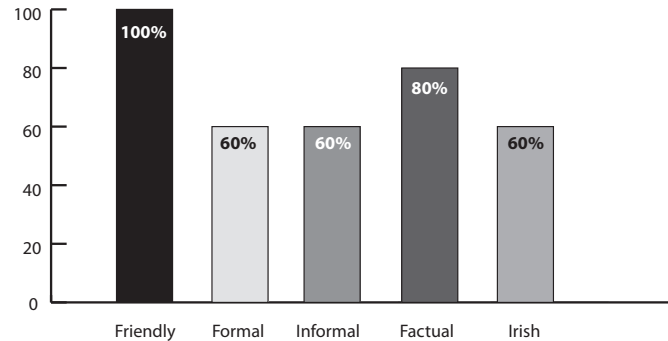


Falls Road: Colours and materials

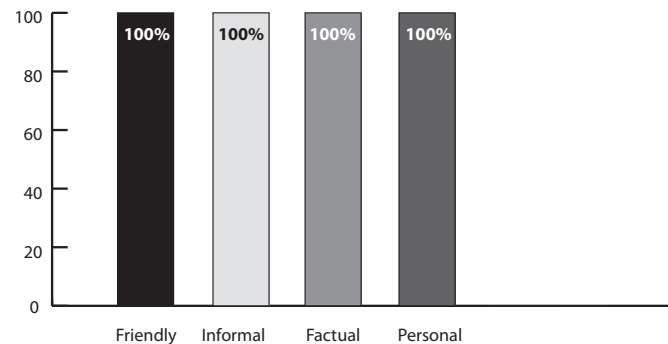


Falls Road: Language

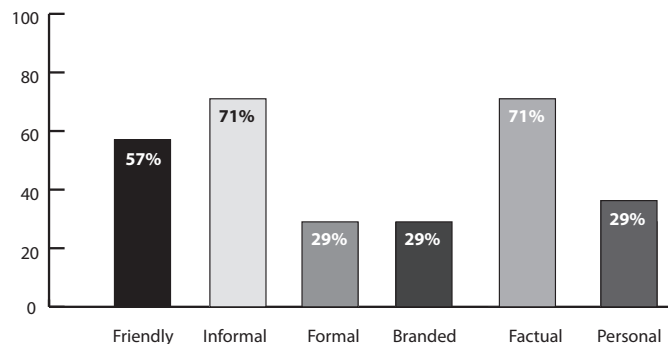
Language signage FR restaurants/cafes



Language signage FR home

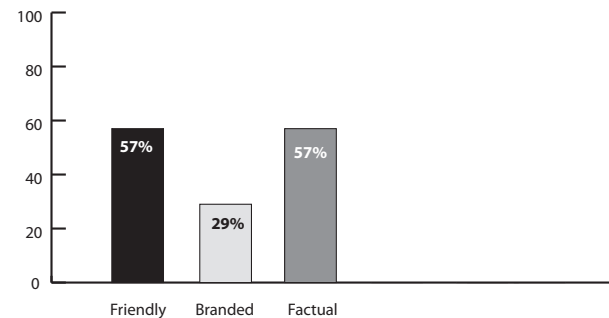


Language signage FR hairdressers/barbers

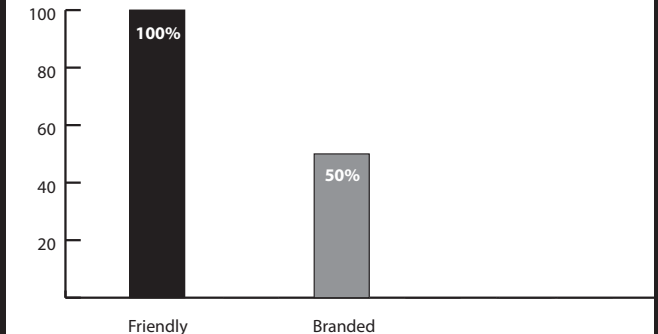


- Signage all categories friendly/only two categories, home and hairdressers/barbers, contained personal language referencing a name of owner or proprietor.
- Significantly, and uniquely Irish language in either business name, translation of name or indicating services provided/ type of goods sold.
- Branding – three out of five categories, takeaway food, grocery and food and hairdressers/barbers.
- Irish language – representative of Irish culture.

Language signage FR carry outs/takeaway food

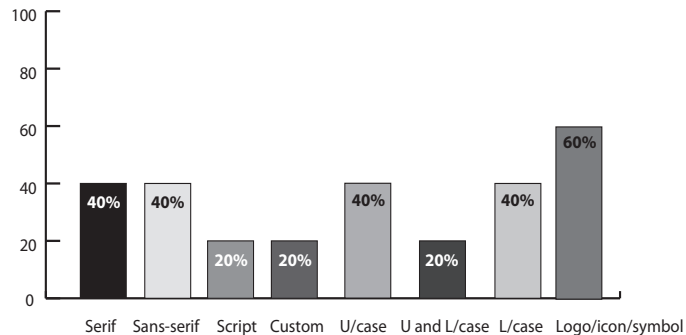


Language signage FR grocery/food category

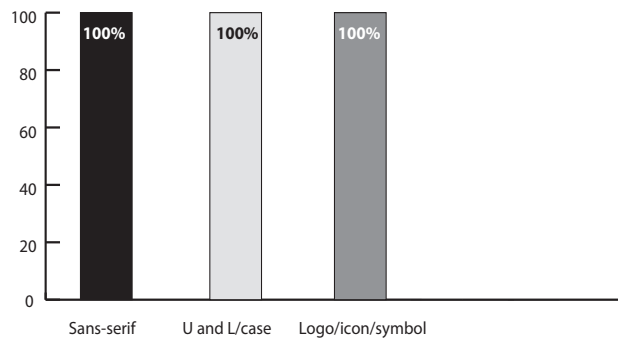


Falls Road: Letterforms

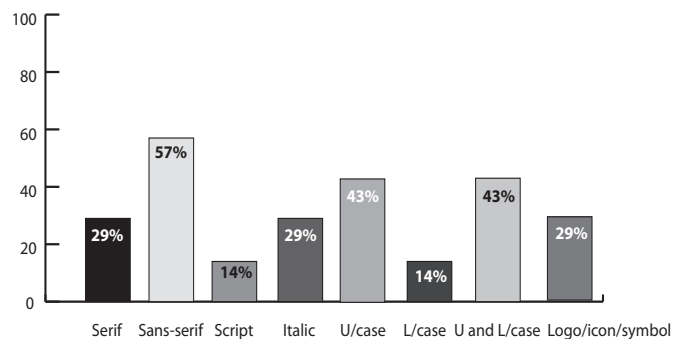
Letterforms signage FR restaurants/cafes



Letterforms signage FR home



Letterforms signage FR hairdressers/barbers



- Even mix of the use of serif and sans-serif typefaces.

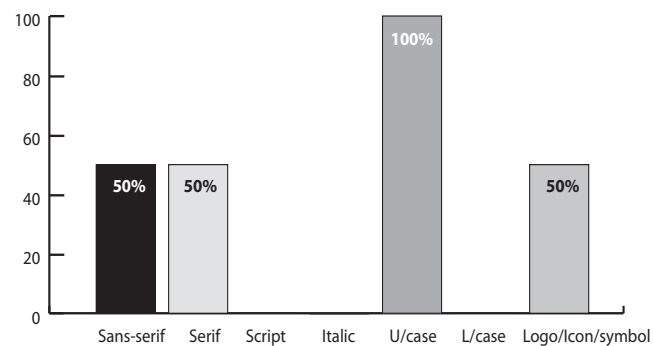
- Script on 3 of 5 categories, takeaway food, restaurants/cafés and hairdressers/barbers.

- Italic only on signage for takeaway food and hairdressers/barbers.

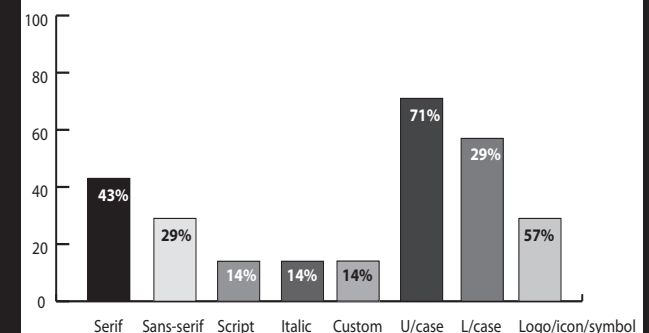
- All uppercase lettering at a high proportion takeaway food category. 3 of 5 categories lowercase only.

- All categories used logos/icons/symbols.

Letterforms signage FR grocery/food category

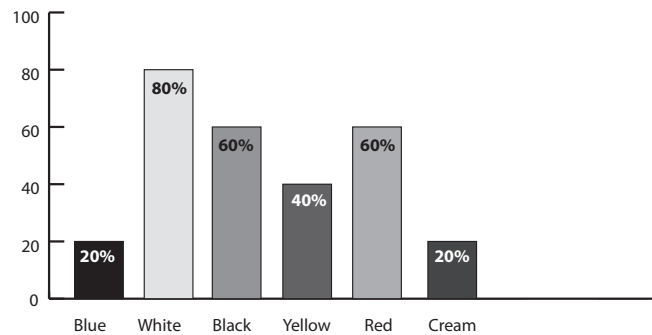


Letterforms signage FR carry outs/takeaway food

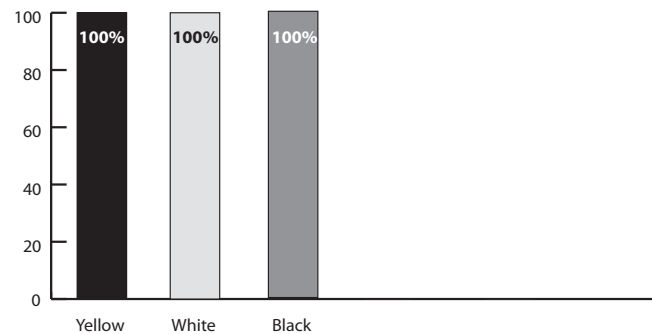


Falls Road: Colours

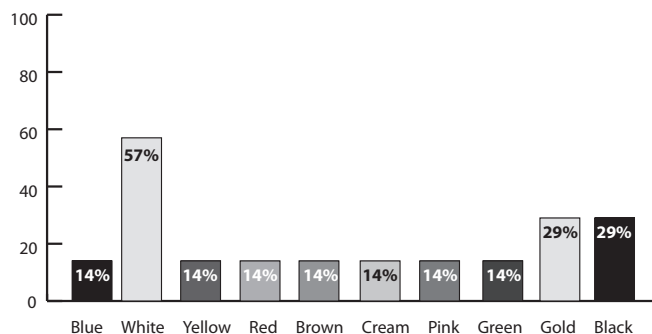
Colours signage FR restaurants/cafes



Colours signage FR home

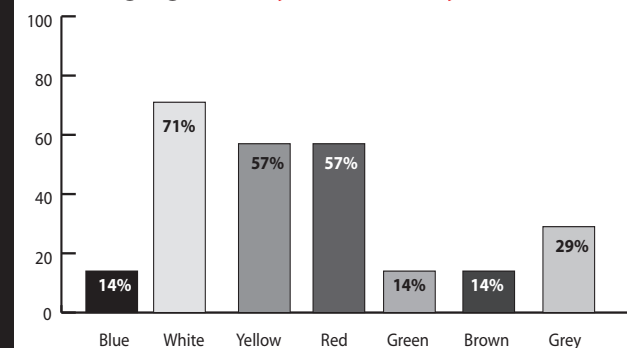


Colours signage FR hairdressers/barbers

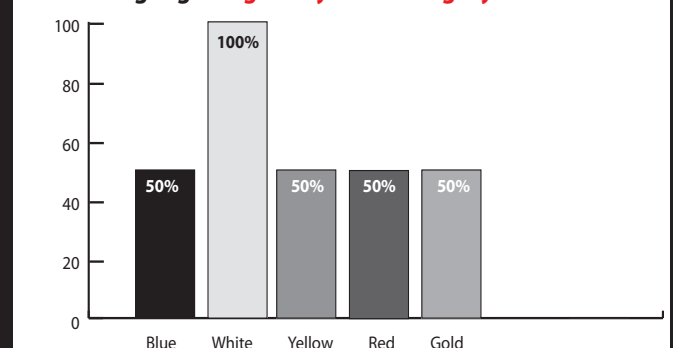


- Wide spectrum from primary palette. Bright colours extends to facades of buildings.
- High proportion all categories use white, gold, black and red plus lots of other colours – seldom muted shades.
- Widest variety hairdressers and barbers, ten colours. Takeaway food wide colour palette also.
- Not totemic, varied, like colours seen in towns and villages in the Republic of Ireland.

Colours signage FR carry outs/takeaway food

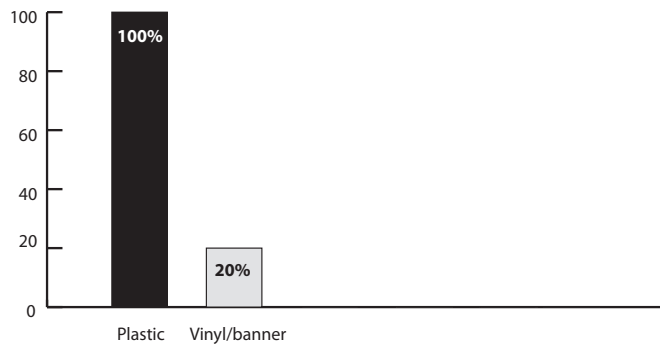


Colours signage FR grocery/food category



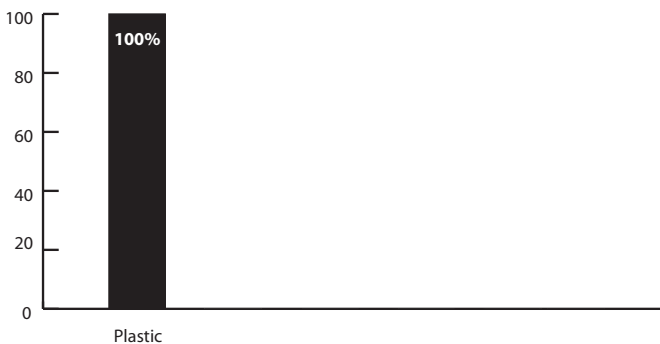
Falls Road: **Materials**

Materials used signage FR restaurants/cafes



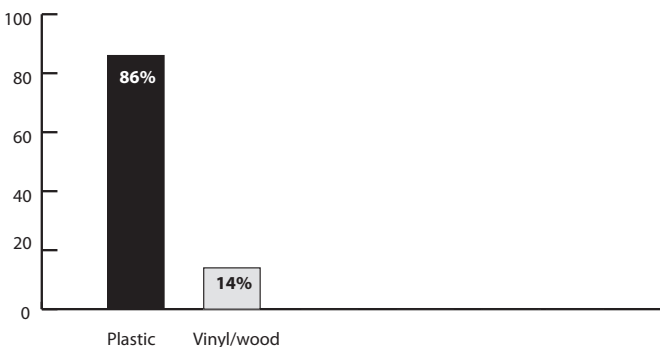
- Limited use of materials. Takeaway food, restaurants/cafés and home category 100% plastic.
- Hairdressers/barbers 14% vinyl and wood.
- No signage made of metal, or expensive materials.

Materials used signage FR home

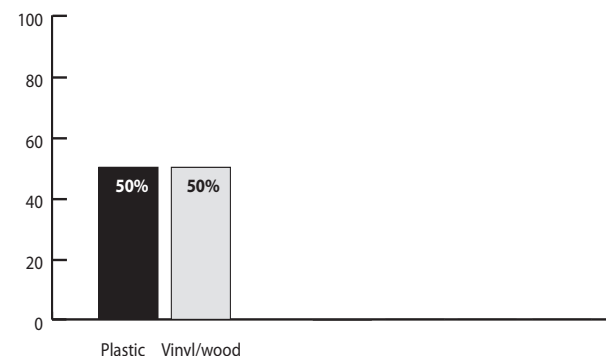


- Lettering often on building fronts not in boxes.
- Inexpensive materials reflect the inexpensive nature of businesses and types of goods and services sold

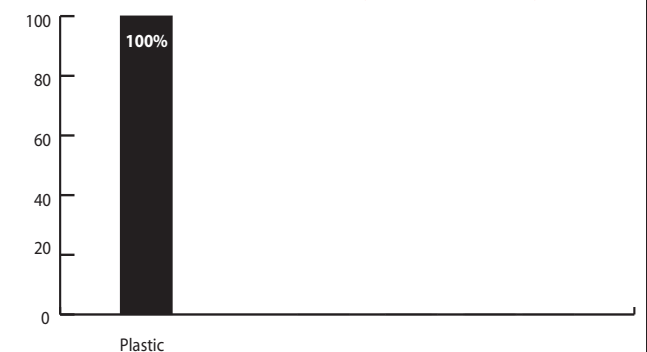
Materials used signage FR hairdressers/barbers



Materials used signage FR grocery/food category

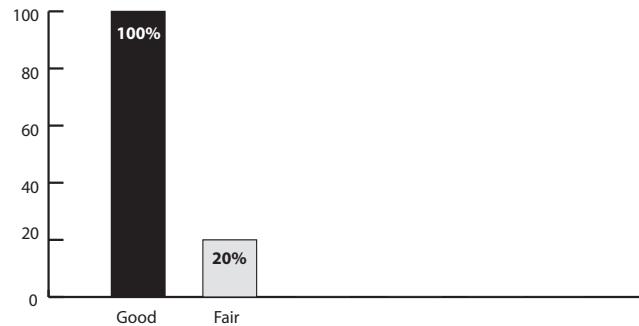


Materials used signage FR carry outs/takeaway food

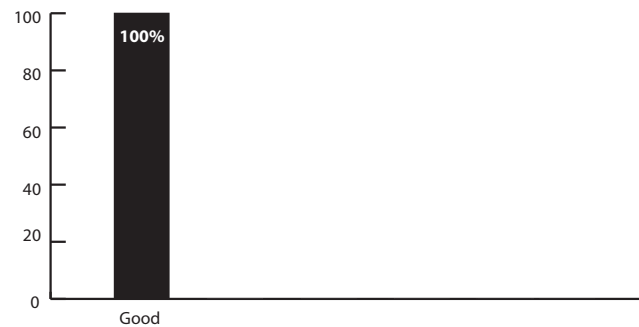


Falls Road: Maintenance (condition)

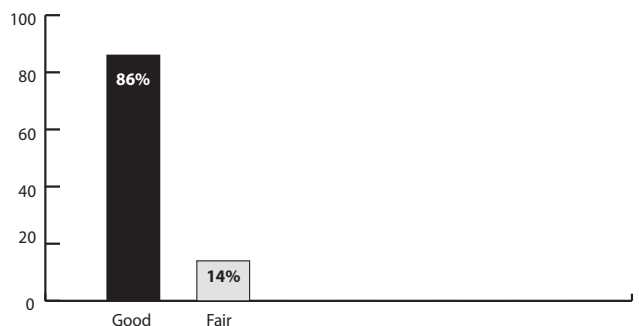
Condition/maintenance signage FR restaurants/cafes



Condition/maintenance signage FR home

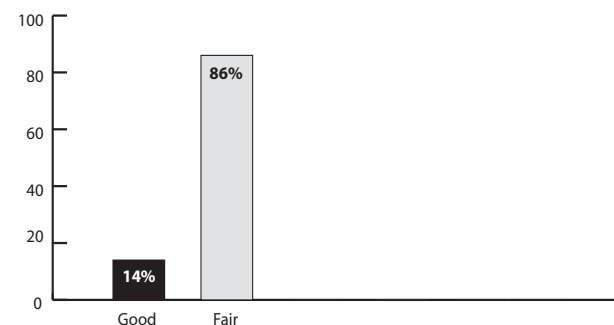


Condition/maintenance signage FR hairdressers/barbers

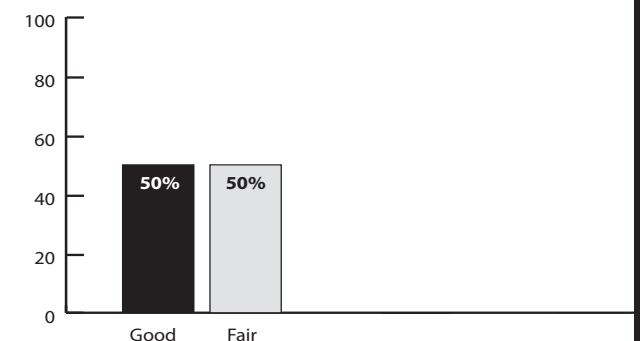


- 100% for the home category in good condition.
- Restaurants/cafés 80% well maintained 20% fair.
- 50% in grocery/food in a good condition.
- No signage was recorded as poorly maintained.
- Falls Road is perceived as being socio-economically stable/ not in decline.

Condition/maintenance signage FR carry outs/takeaway



Condition/maintenance signage FR grocery/food



Lisburn Road: Language and typography

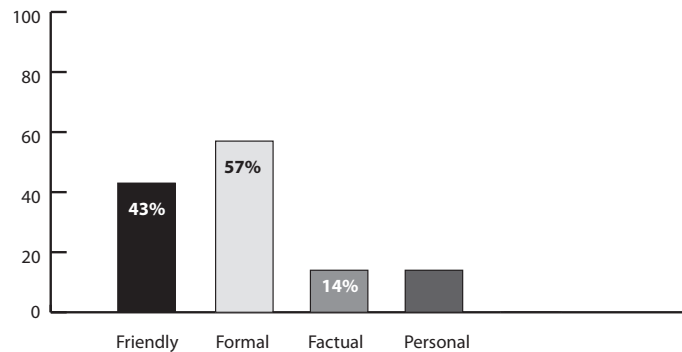


Lisburn Road: Colours and materials

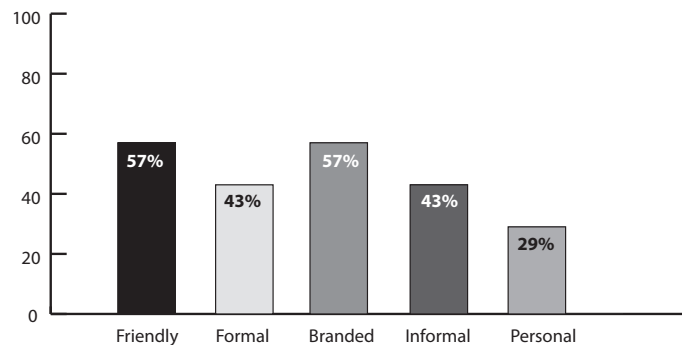


Lisburn Road: Language

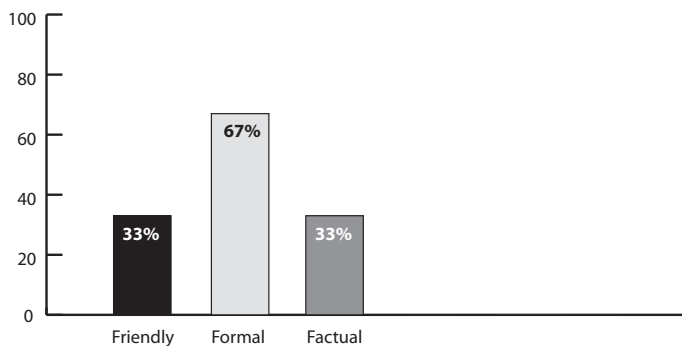
Language signage LR grocery/food category



Language signage LR restaurants/cafes

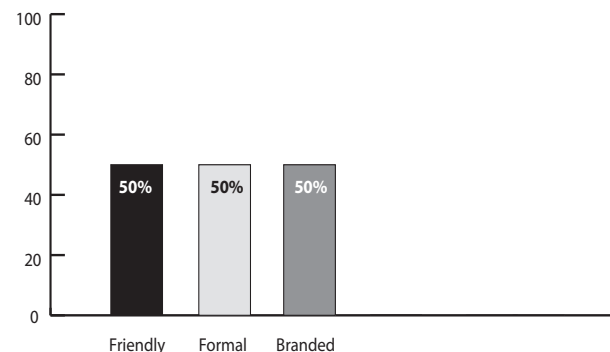


Language signage LR home

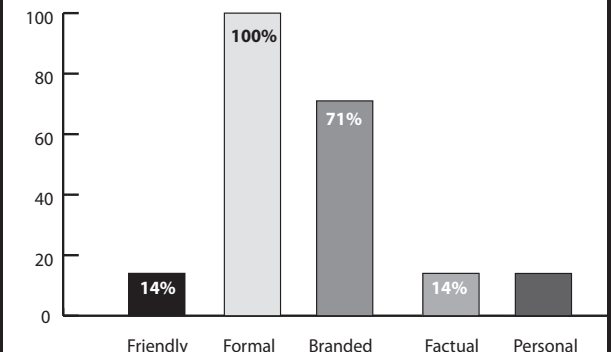


- 100% for the hairdressers/barbers is formal.
- Branding evident on 3 of 5 categories, takeaway food, restaurants/café and hairdressers/barbers.
- In only three categories is factual denotational language used to describe business purpose.
- The formal language and branding reflect the sophisticated aspirational themes of the Lisburn Road, exclusive businesses and robust economy.

Language signage LR carry outs/takeaway food

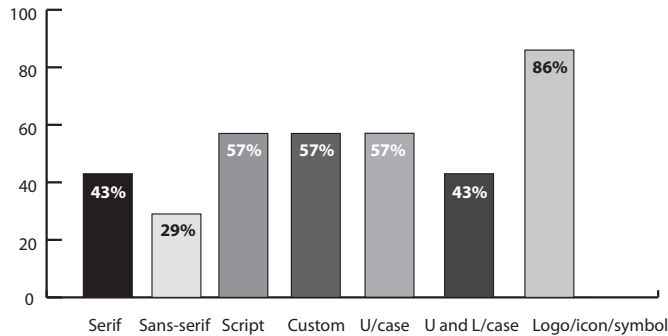


Language signage LR hairdressers/barbers

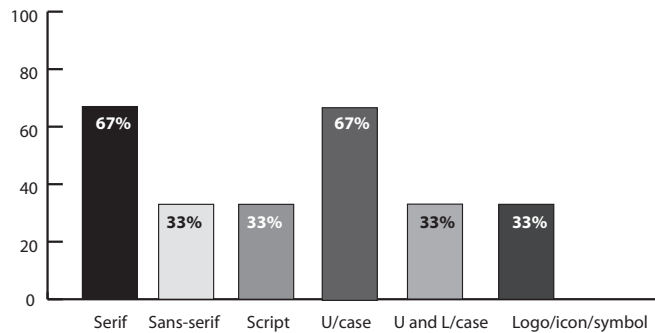


Lisburn Road: Letterform

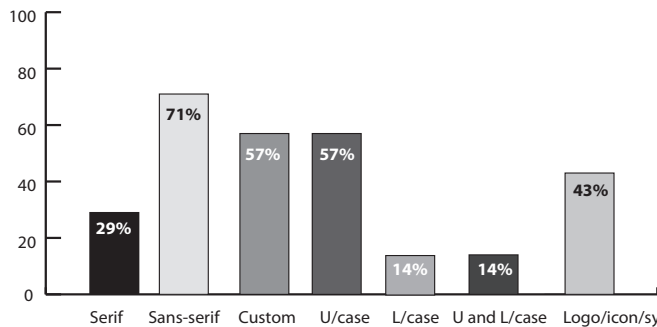
Letterforms signage LR restaurants/cafes



Letterforms signage LR home

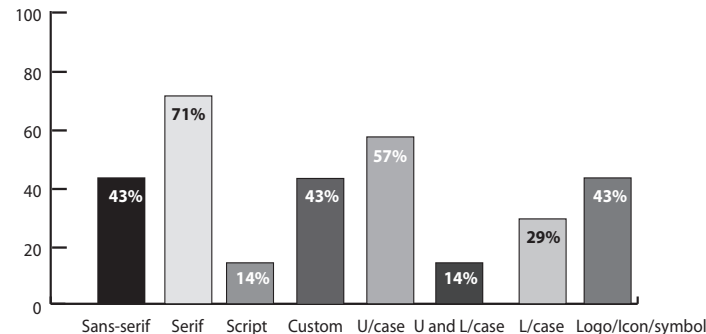


Letterforms signage LR hairdressers/barbers

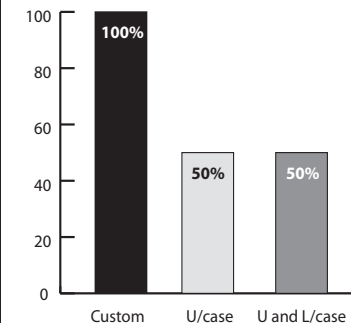


- High percentage of custom fonts and/or design intervention on how letterforms appear.
- Grocery and food, restaurants/cafés and home – higher percentage use serif than sans-serif lettering. Only in these categories was script used.
- Custom lettering and indication of design intervention in 4 of 5 categories for aspirational language.
- Letterforms reflect exclusive businesses, robust economy of Lisburn Road.

Letterforms signage LR grocery/food category

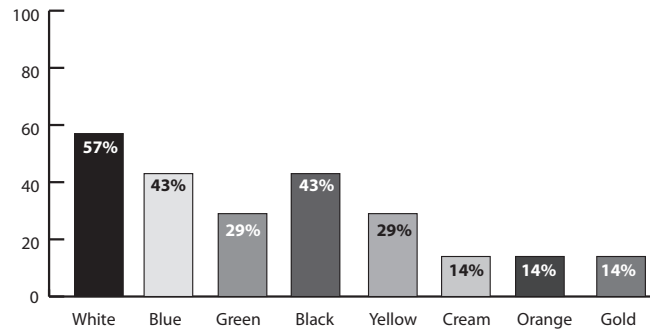


Letterforms signage LR carry outs/takeaway food

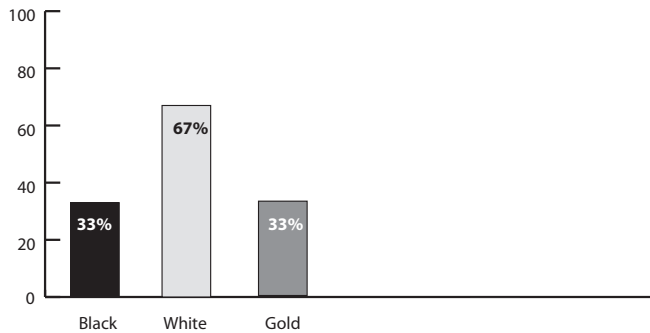


Lisburn Road: Colours

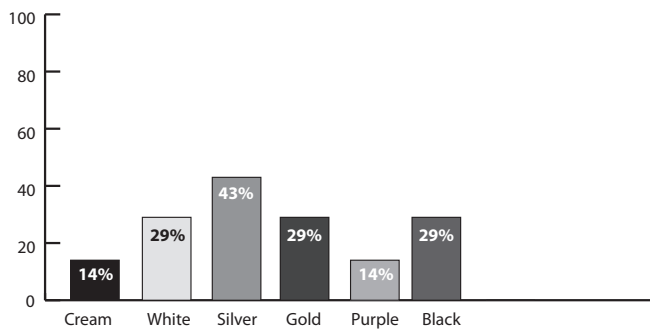
Colours signage LR restaurants/cafes



Colours signage LR home

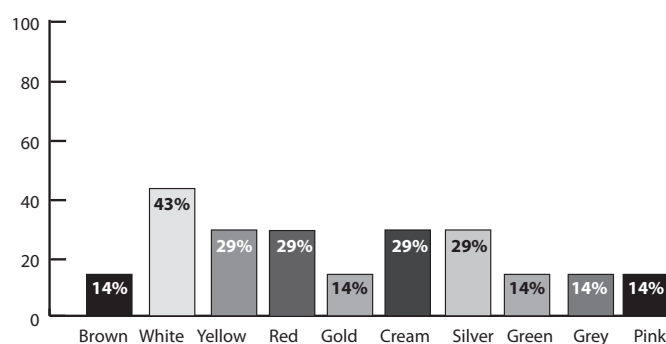


Colours signage LR hairdressers/barbers

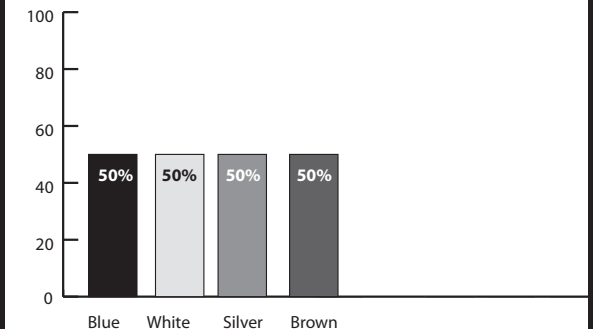


- Colour palette muted and sophisticated hues.
- Grocery and food category uses the widest spectrum of colours, but less than 30% are primary hues.
- Silver or gold are used in all categories to indicate luxury or alchemy. Cream in 3 of 5 categories.
- This limited, muted and expensive overarching theme of signage expressed through use of colour may be associated with exclusive and often expensive goods and services.

Colours signage LR grocery/food category

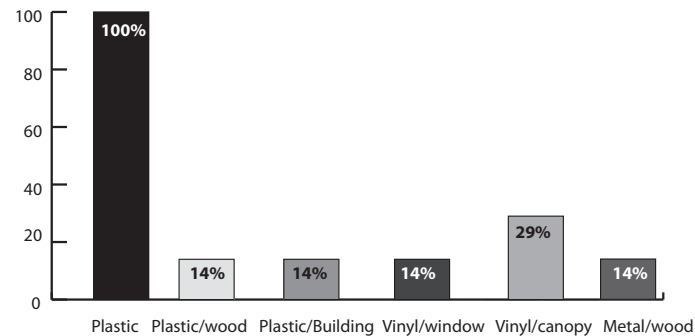


Colours signage LR carry outs/takeaway food



Lisburn Road: **Materials**

Materials used signage LR restaurants/cafes

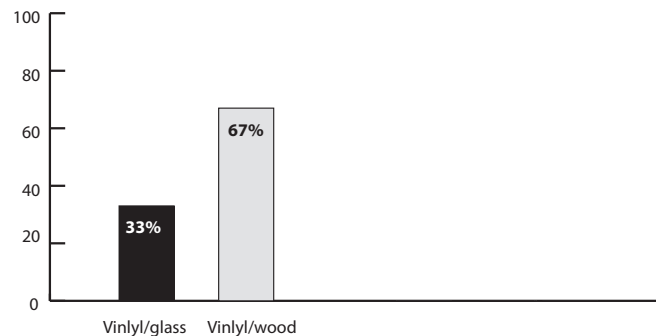


- Plastic on 4 of 5 categories, but at a usually much lower percentage than observed on other routes. Only in the restaurant/cafés category is it used in 100% of signs, but is one of a range of materials used.

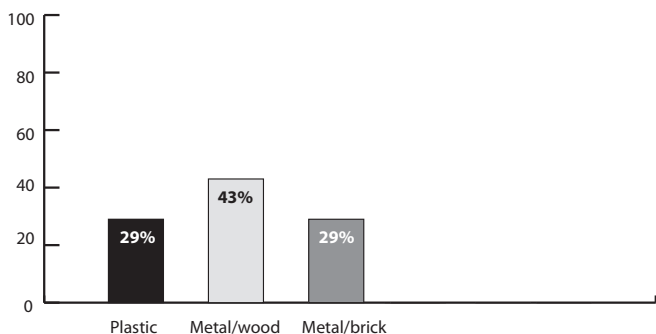
- Wide range of expensive materials used. Metal and wood on a high proportion for takeaway food, grocery & food, hairdressers/barbers categories.

- Metal is used for signage in 4 of 5 categories and is used either to display lettering on fascia boards or to place them directly onto the fronts of buildings.

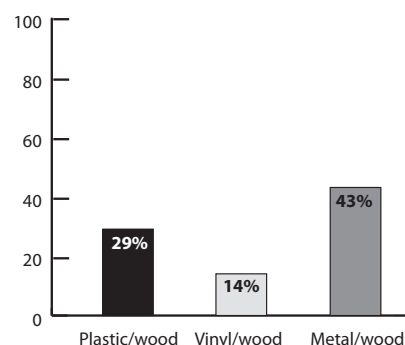
Materials used signage LR home



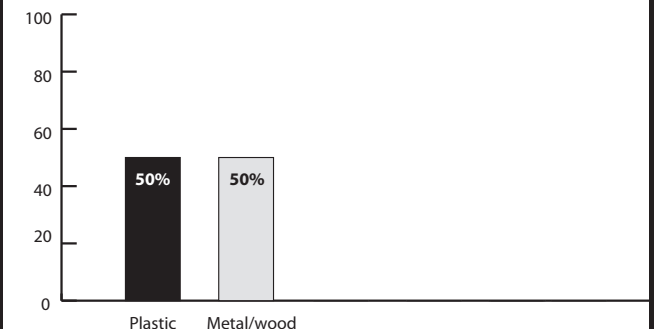
Materials used signage LR hairdressers/barbers



Materials used signage LR grocery/food category



Materials used signage LR carry outs/takeaway food



Lisburn Road: Maintenance (condition)

Condition/maintenance signage LR restaurants/cafes



Condition/maintenance signage LR home



Condition/maintenance signage LR hairdressers/barbers

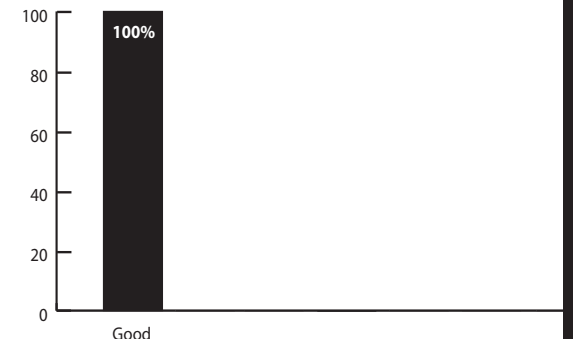


- All signage was recorded as being in good condition.
- Well maintained, new and well designed signage apparent on this route is reflective of the equally well-maintained built environment of the Lisburn Road.
- Architecture and aspirational addresses embellished by shiny signs using metal materials in muted hues, with custom letterforms.
- Well-maintained environment/robust economy/low incidence of crime or vandalism.

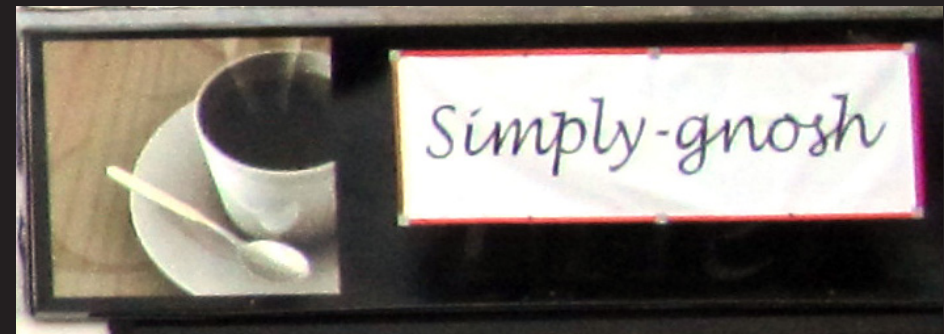
Condition/maintenance signage LR carry outs/takeaway



Condition/maintenance signage LR grocery/food



Newtownards Road: Language and typography

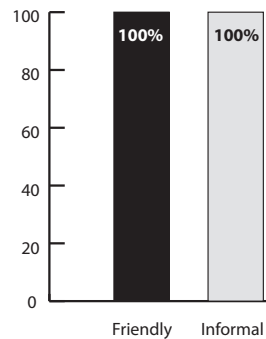


Newtownards Road: Colours and materials

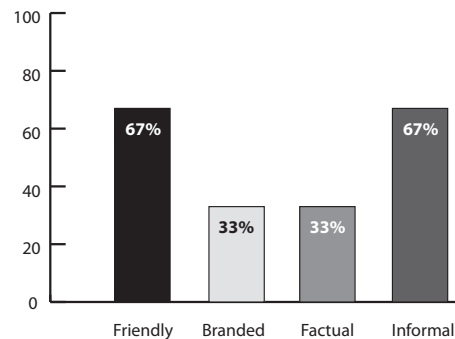


Newtownards Road: Language

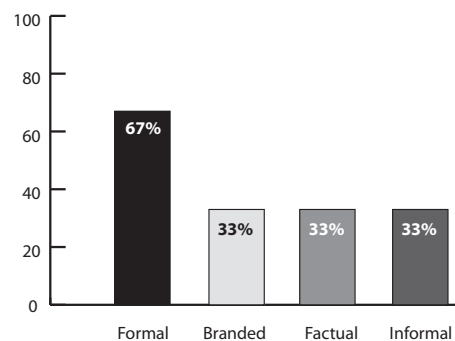
Language signage NR restaurants/cafes



Language signage NR home

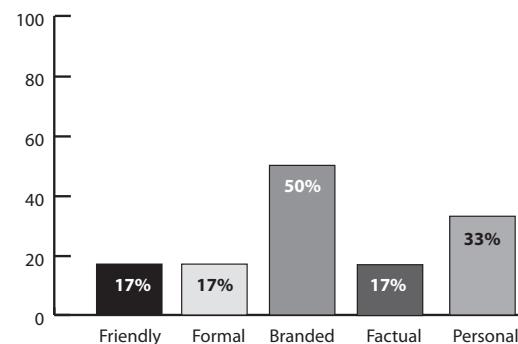


Language signage NR hairdressers/barbers

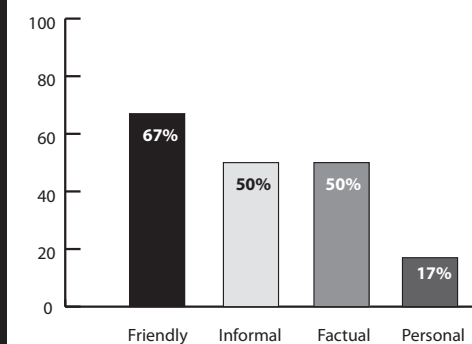


- In all but the hairdressers/barbers category language is perceived as friendly and in high percentages.
- Across all categories factual language denoted business purpose and type of goods sold.
- Grocery/food and takeaway food categories names of proprietors or owners were indicated.
- Friendly, informal overarching theme of Language reflects the types of businesses and local socio-economic and cultural themes of place.

Language signage NR grocery/food category

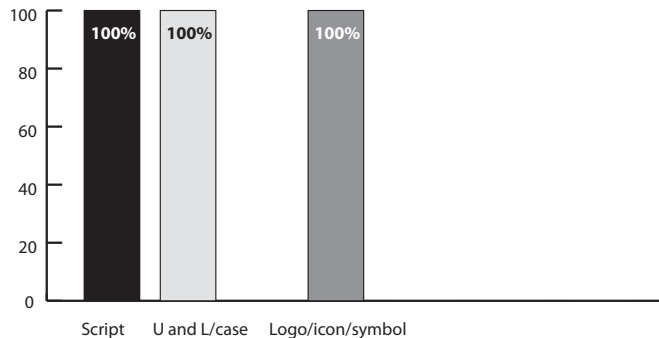


Language signage NR carry outs/takeaway food

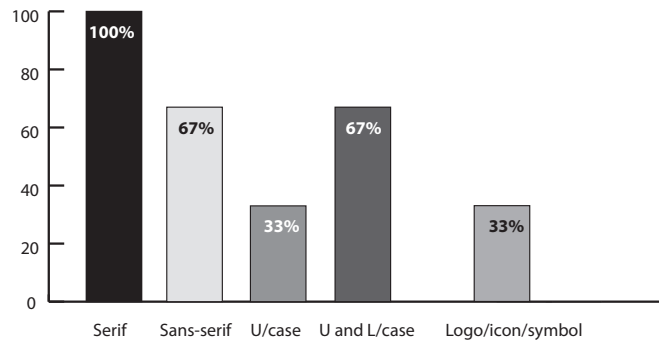


Newtownards Road: Letterforms

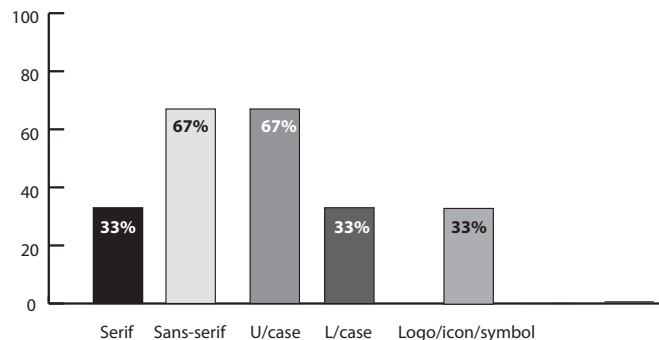
Letterforms signage NR restaurants/cafes



Letterforms signage NR home



Letterforms signage NR hairdressers/barbers



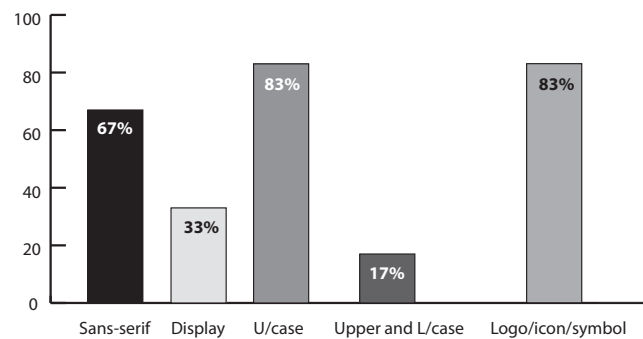
- Most commonly occurring letterforms were sans-serif.

- No custom lettering evident on this route and design intervention generally perceived as minimal.

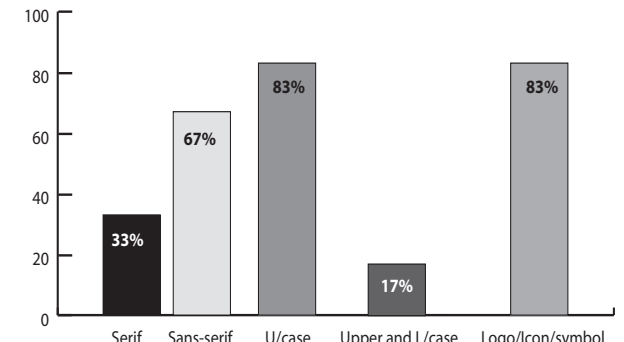
- Ornate display typography evident in 33% of signs for the takeaway food category. Logos, icons or symbols on all categories.

- Simplicity of typefaces/high percentage of sans-serif lettering reflects basic nature of goods sold.

Letterforms signage NR carry outs/takeaway food

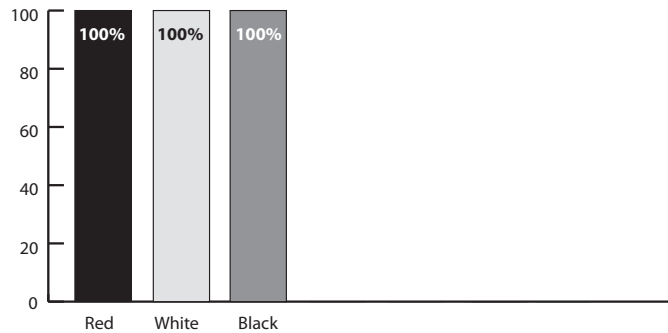


Letterforms signage NR grocery/food category

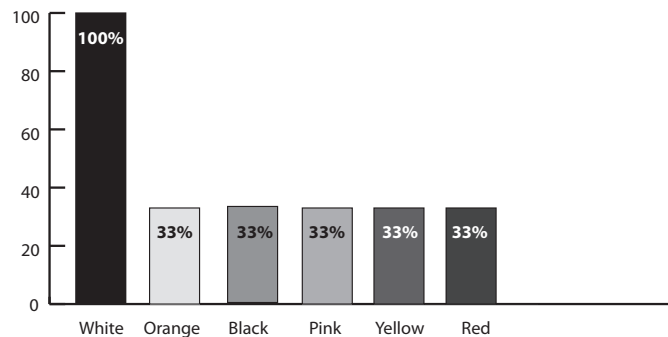


Newtownards Road: Colours

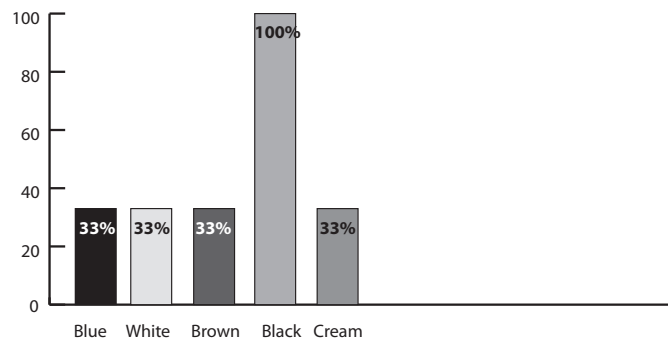
Colours signage NR restaurants/cafes



Colours signage NR home

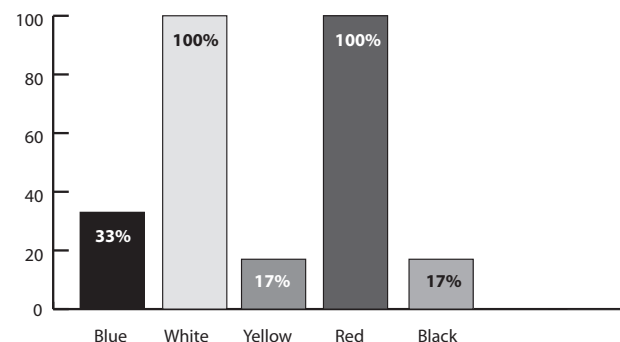


Colours signage NR hairdressers/barbers

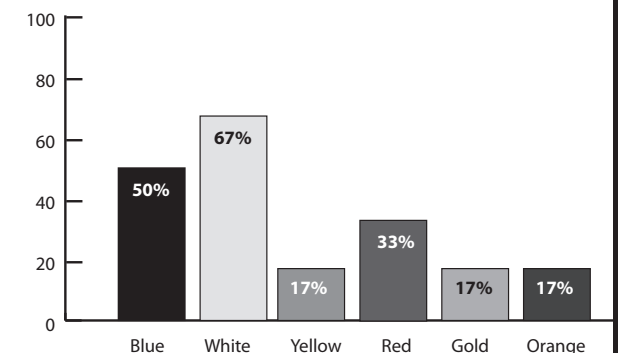


- Most commonly occurring colours and highest percentage of observed incidences are white, red and blue.
- Other colours observed, but in low percentages, were yellow, black, orange, gold, brown, pink and cream.
- Signage on shops selling goods for the home exhibited the broadest spectrum of colours
- Signage for the hairdressers/barbers category departed from the range of primary hues thematic to this route,

Colours signage NR carry outs/takeaway food

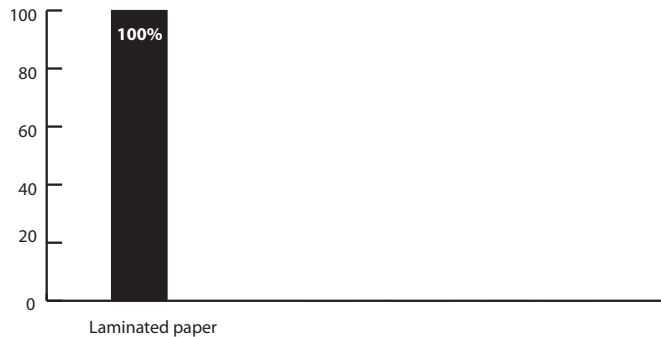


Colours signage NR grocery/food category

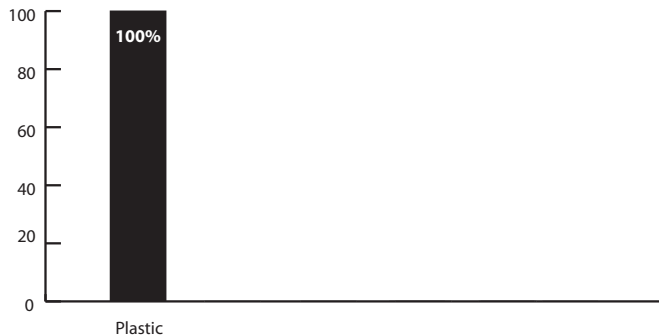


Newtownards Road: **Materials**

Materials used signage NR restaurants/cafes

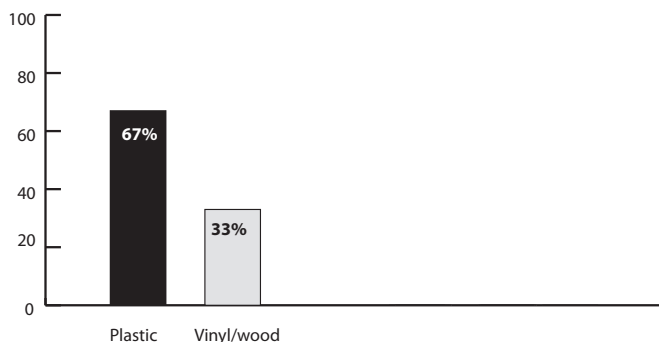


Materials used signage NR home

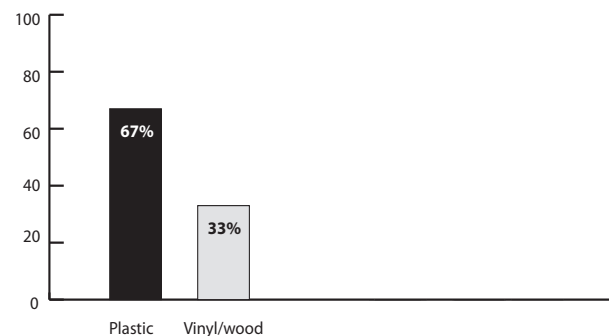


- Limited variety of materials. In all but the restaurant/café category the greatest percentage was plastic. Some vinyl/wood – even laminated paper.
- The inexpensive materials used for the creation of signage on this route reflect local socio-economic undercurrents of a place where there are limited economic means and the economy of place and built environment appear to be in decline.
- Modest materials used in signage mirror overarching socio-economic themes.

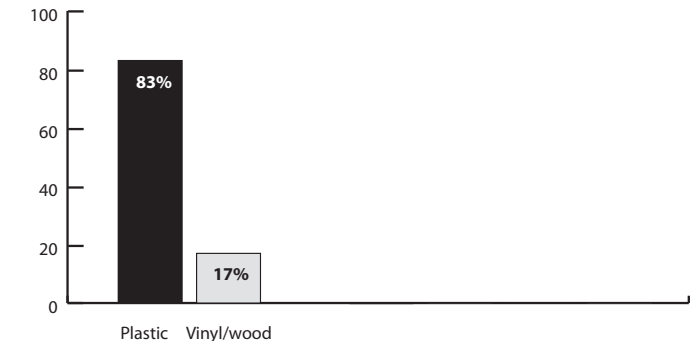
Materials used signage NR hairdressers/barbers



Materials used signage NR carry outs/takeaway food

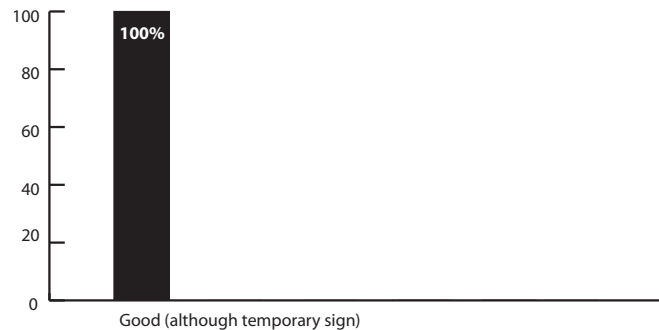


Materials used signage NR grocery/food category



Newtownards Road: Maintenance (condition)

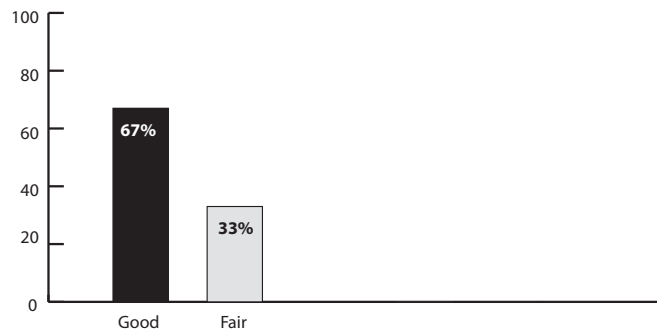
Condition/maintenance signage NR restaurants/cafes



- Only the category for restaurants/café's shows signage to be in good condition in 100% of incidences.

- In all of the other categories there was a perceived need for maintenance on at least some signage, with weathering, fading or breakage evident.

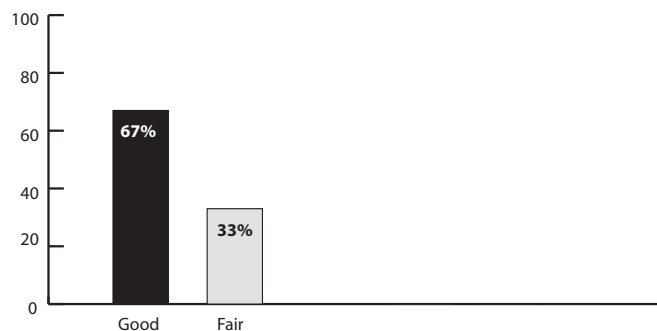
Condition/maintenance signage NR home



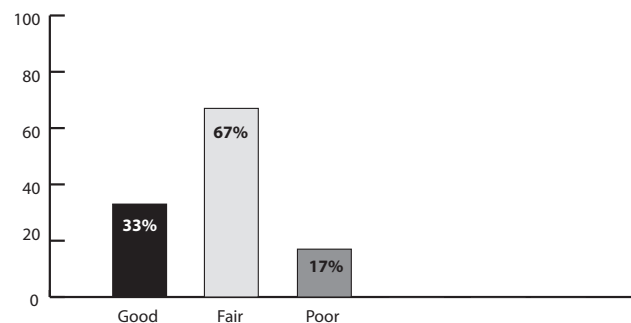
- Remaining signage for all categories was perceived to be in need of maintenance – for the grocery/food category 17% was in a poor condition.

- Perceived need for maintenance of signage extended to the built environment which also needed attention.

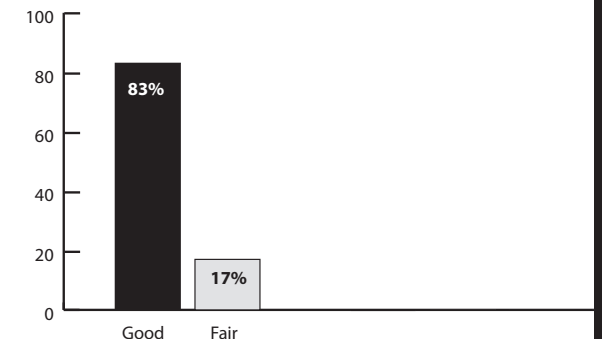
Condition/maintenance signage NR hairdressers/barbers



Condition/maintenance signage NR carry outs/takeaway



Condition/maintenance signage NR grocery/food



Ormeau Road: Language and typography



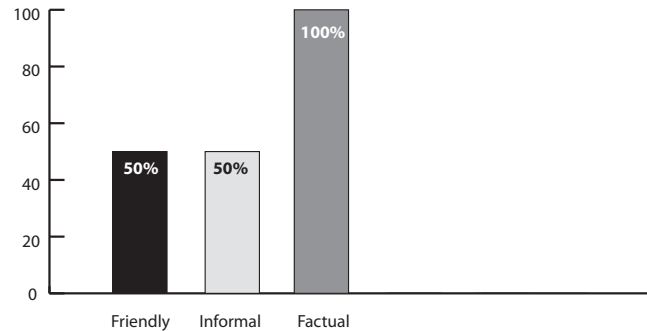
Ormeau Road: Colours and materials



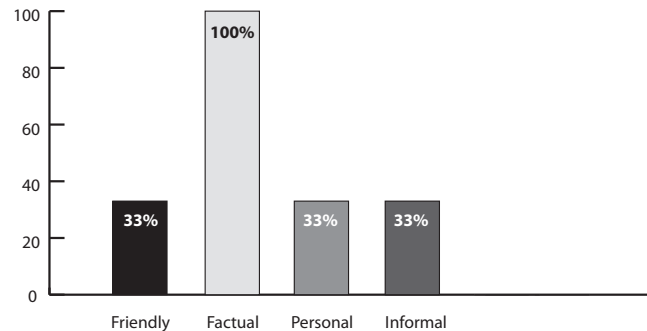
Ormeau Road: Language

- In all categories factual language denoting business purpose was observed – 100% of signs for restaurants/cafés, home and hairdressers/barbers.
- Only grocery/food and home categories had personal language indicating the name of the owner/proprietor.
- The overarching friendly theme of signage on the Ormeau Road reflects informal community conversations of a population of place comprised of people from varying cultural backgrounds – language often referenced different cultures.

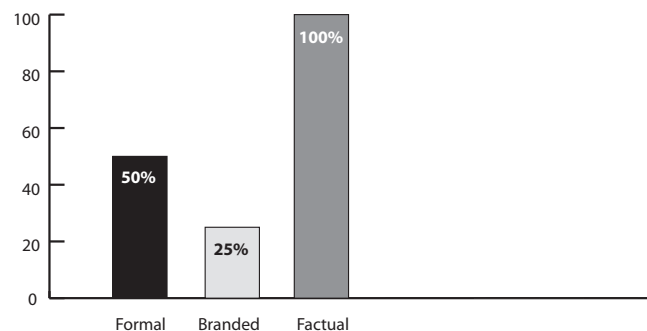
Language signage OR restaurants/cafes



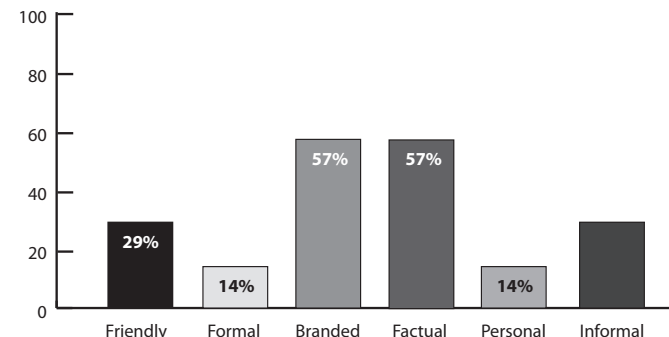
Language signage OR home



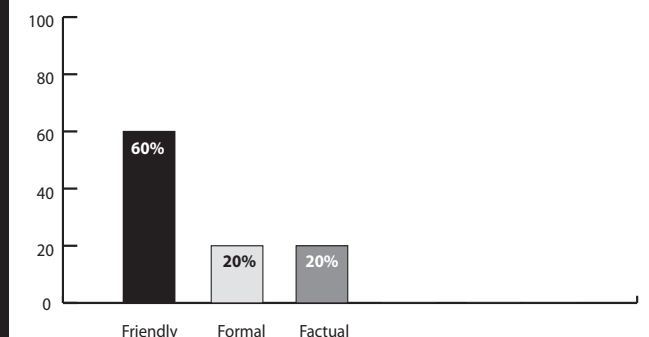
Language signage OR hairdressers/barbers



Language signage OR grocery/food category

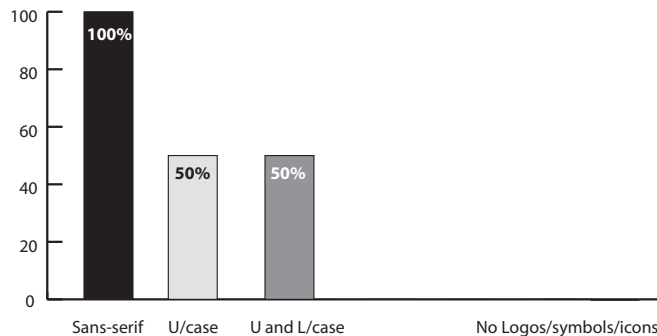


Language signage OR carry outs/takeaway food

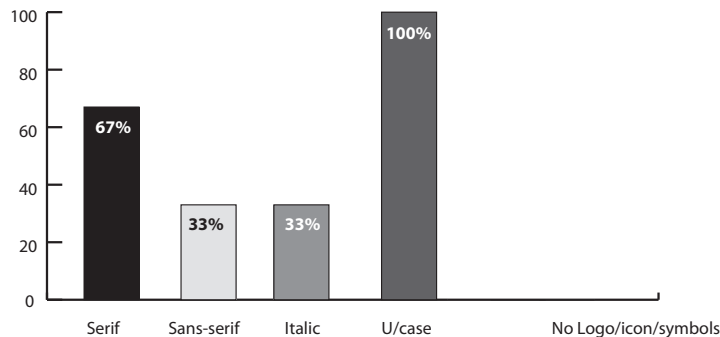


Ormeau Road: Letterform

Letterforms signage OR restaurants/cafes

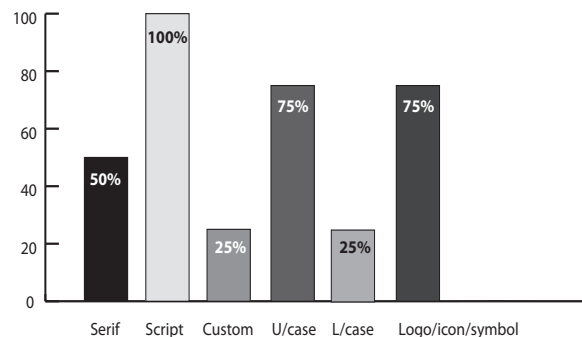


Letterforms signage OR home

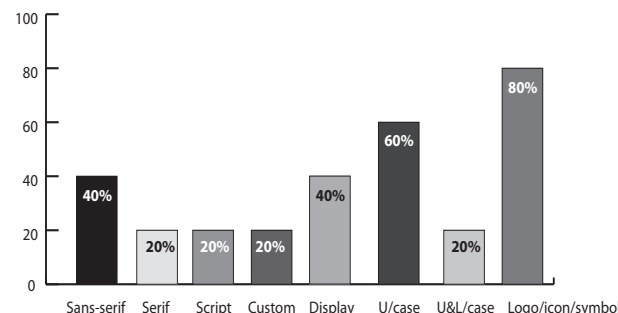


- Eclectic mix of letterforms reflecting the diverse cultural mix of the Ormeau Road.
- In 3 of 5 categories the most commonly occurring type of letterform observed was sans-serif.
- Serif lettering evident in grocery/food, takeaway food, hairdressers and barbers and home categories.
- Script on hairdressers/barbers and takeaway food.
- Display typefaces in the takeaway food category.

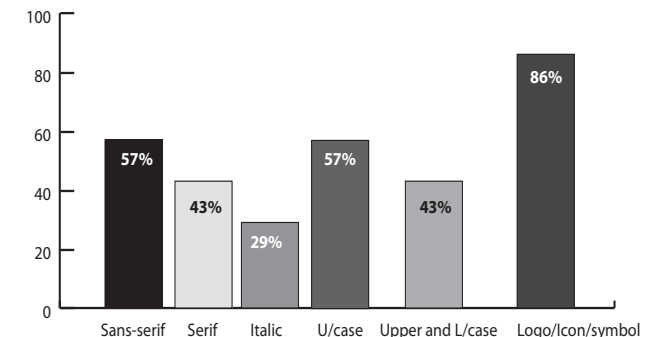
Letterforms signage OR hairdressers/barbers



Letterforms signage OR carry outs/takeaway food

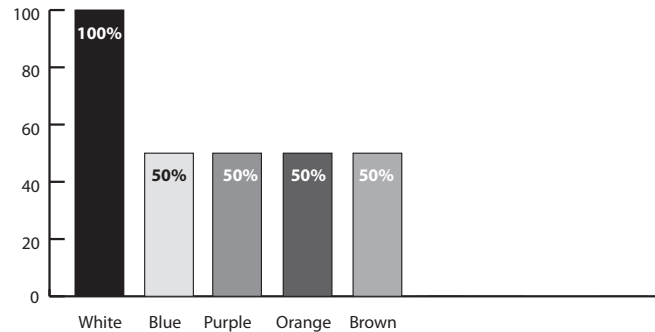


Letterforms signage OR grocery/food category

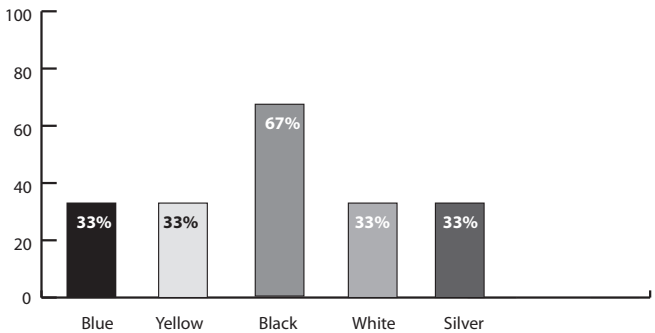


Lisburn Road: Colours

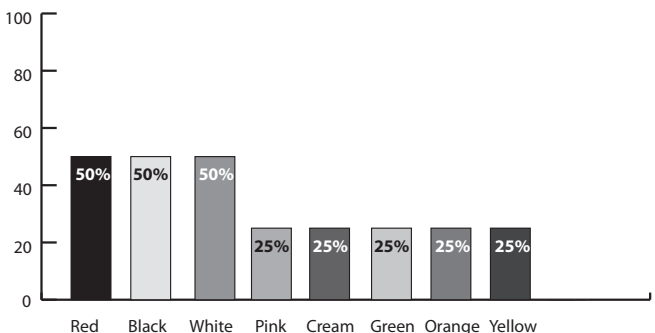
Colours signage OR restaurants/cafes



Colours signage OR home

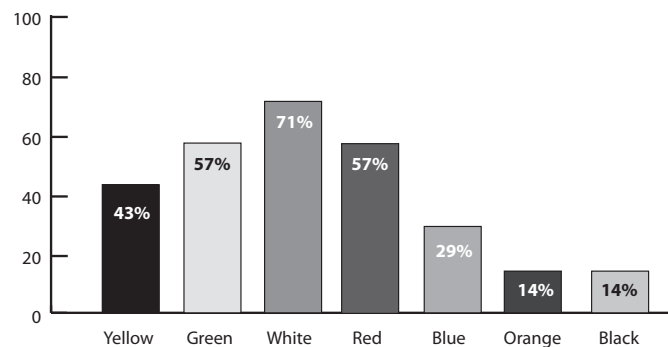


Colours signage OR hairdressers/barbers

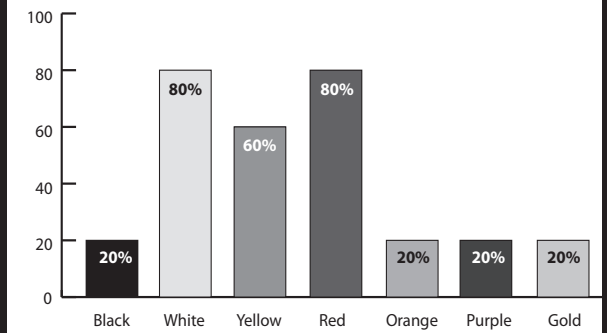


- Wide range of hues from across the colour spectrum, reflecting the diverse cultural mix of population.
- Notably absent were totemic colour palettes which might be associated with traditional Nationalist or Unionist communities in the city.
- Where on the Antrim, Newtownards and Falls Roads colour palettes extended beyond signage to the built environment of place, on the Ormeau Road signage was brightly coloured but buildings retained either red brick facades or were painted in muted hues.

Colours signage OR grocery/food category

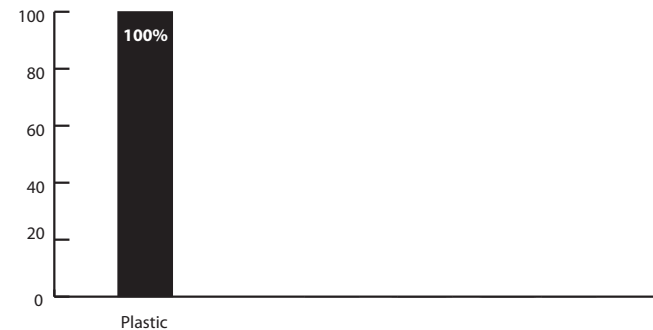


Colours signage OR carry outs/takeaway food



Ormeau Road: **Materials**

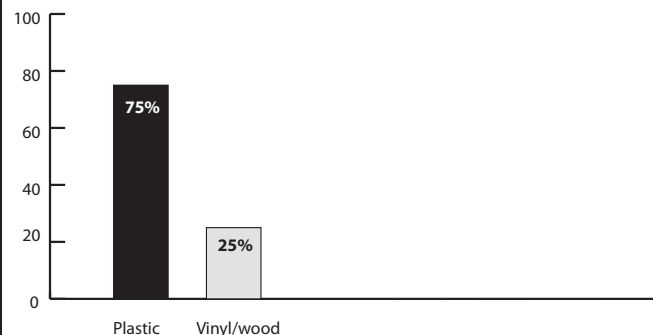
Materials used signage OR restaurants/cafes



Materials used signage OR home



Materials used signage OR hairdressers/barbers

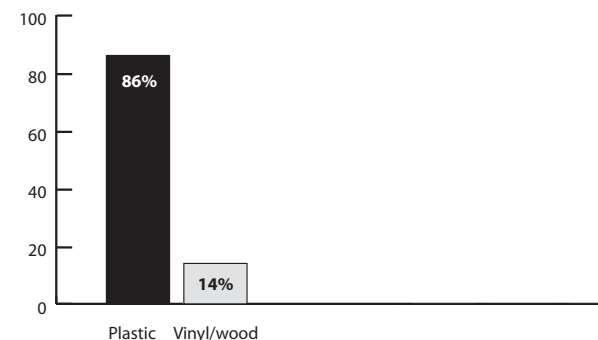


- Most commonly used was plastic – 100% of incidences for the takeaway food, grocery/food, restaurants/café and home categories. 75% of hairdressers/barbers signage used plastic, for the remainder vinyl on wood was used.

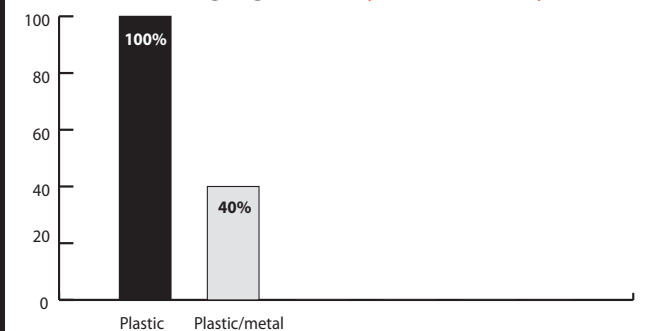
- 40% for the takeaway food category included use of metal materials. 14% of grocery/food signage was created using vinyl on a wooden fascia board.

- Simply constructed, with minimal design intervention.

Materials used signage OR grocery/food category



Materials used signage OR carry outs/takeaway food



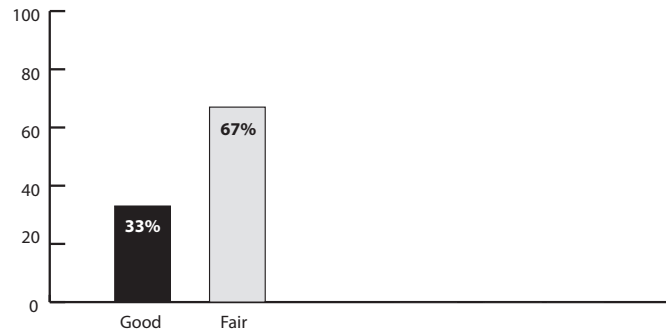
Ormeau Road: Maintenance (condition)

Condition/maintenance signage OR restaurants/cafes



- Only in the restaurants/café category was 100% of signage perceived to be well maintained.
- Some signage for the grocery/food and home categories was fairly well maintained, with evidence of weathering, fading or breakage.

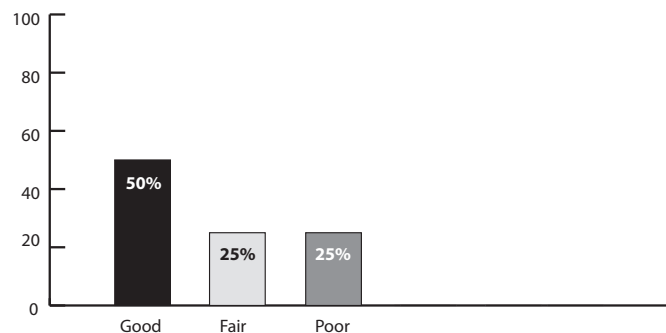
Condition/maintenance signage OR home



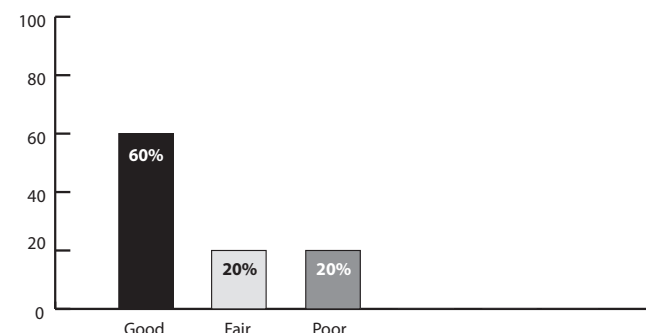
- Some signage in the takeaway food and hairdressers/barbers category poorly maintained and in need of repair or replacement.

- Built environment was well-maintained.

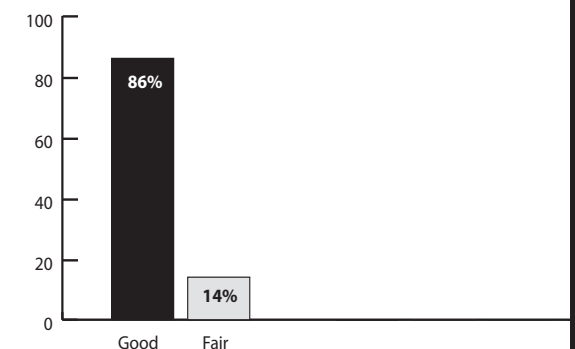
Condition/maintenance signage OR hairdressers/barbers



Condition/maintenance signage OR carry outs/takeaway



Condition/maintenance signage OR grocery/food



Conclusions

- There was a correlation between observations on signage, the built environment and underlying socio-cultural and economic themes of the places in which it was situated.
- By observing qualities of signage it is possible to learn about place.
- Language on signage related to local urban vernacular discourses reflecting informal community relations and conversations of place.
- On the essentially Nationalist Falls Road, where Irish language forms a significant part of local culture, Irish translations appeared prominently on signs.
- Typography on signage, the means by which language is given form, was analysed, choice of letterform further enhanced the character of local socio-cultural and economic discourses.
- Application of colour codes to letterforms and to the main body of signage reinforced their socio-economic and cultural value.

Conclusions

- Buildings shared qualities of signage, from perceived maintenance to the types of goods sold.
- When advertised goods were modest, signage was perceived as modest, as were the buildings on which it was situated.
- Where the built environment was generally perceived to be in need of maintenance this pattern extended to the perceived need for maintenance of signage.
- Where modern and postmodern developments contributed to overarching environmental themes, as on the Lisburn Road, materials used in signage were observed to be similarly modern and contemporary, using custom materials in muted hues.
- Colour palettes were observed to extend beyond signs to the built environment.
- Ormeau Road had a diverse colour palette for signs but not for building facades.

Implications

- This study provides a lasting archive of signage and city spaces and places documenting what may be disappearing evidence of socio-economic and cultural themes represented by signage.
- Increasingly, intervention in city spaces seeks to replace weathered, broken or faded signage, with this intervention comes the risk of diluting the authentic local narrative value of urban vernacular signs, replacing it with non place-specific themes.
- Such intervention is a global phenomena, as demonstrated by the work of other researchers such as Ertep (Istanbul) and Fleishmann (N. Queensland), each of whom have made observations on how intervention on signage may eradicate evidence of true societal themes, effectively neutralising evidence of culture.
- Intervention on signage may be necessary to bolster ailing economies and improve aesthetics of places, stopping or reversing decline (preventing Wilson and Kelling's broken window theory) but should, when necessary, be undertaken with care.
- Place specific socio-economic and cultural codes, language, letterform, colour, materials, should be considered in the creation, or recreation, of signage.

Implications

- In replacing old with new, as broken signage may be beyond repair, maintenance, indicative of patina and historical evidences of place, may, necessarily, be lost.
- The suggestion is not that signage should not, when necessary, be replaced, but that, when replaced, cultural codes of place should be retained.
- Temporal evolution of place may occur naturally as old signs mix with new in the creation of the image of place, but new should, it is argued, reflect something of the place-specific values represented on older signage.
- Through thoughtful intervention and a regard for the value of signage as a reliable socio-economic indicator and cultural artefact, the character of urban places may be maintained and remanufacturing of the image of place avoided.
- It is hoped this research may be of value to many involved in undertakings in the built environment.
- It is also hoped that the research may be undertaken in other built environments.